Being Bold(er) Means... 2019 Year in Review
WHY PLAY IT SAFE?

We believe in taking risks when it comes to addressing the needs of underserved youth. Taking risks means pushing past the status quo—and, to do that, we start by asking difficult questions.
WE ASK OURSELVES...

If we can solve this with our funding, does it have the potential to create an opportunity for a young person to rise to new heights or, conversely, does the failure to solve this lead to a significant downturn in a young person’s life trajectory?

OUR APPROACH

We focus on “inflection point” funding within a venture philanthropy framework. We closely consider specific obstacles that keep underserved youth from realizing their full potential, and then we identify key junctures, or inflection points, where our grants might change the course of their lives. From there, we look for innovative programs, partnerships, and solutions that address those junctures, and are grounded in positive, long-term outcomes.

Learn more at heckscherfoundation.org
CATALYTIC GIVING
We fund approaches that have the potential for wide application but have not reached a scale broad enough to attract investment by larger private foundations or government. We view funding as catalytic when our dollars can have an impact exponentially greater than the projected results of any one or more years of funding.

STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS
We promote collaborations between foundations, not-for-profits, for-profits, and the public sector that may have overlapping approaches, goals, or skill sets in the areas of education, job skills, and innovative revenue models.

TARGETED PROBLEM SOLVING
We define specific challenges that have attainable solutions and then encourage creative problem solvers to test those solutions, which often address barriers to equal opportunity that have been overlooked or under-appreciated.

PROVEN MODELS
These selected grantees reflect those organizations and institutions whose work we are proud to have supported over multiple years.
Be Bold...
To
College
How can we work around barriers that inhibit families from making informed high school choices?

We supported The Education Trust—New York on two data visualization projects that make New York State high school data transparent and accessible to families.

The first is a data visualization tool that shows the percentage of seniors with a completed Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) in each public high school in each school district in New York State. Consider that 90% of high school seniors who complete the FAFSA go on to college immediately after graduation, compared with 55% who do not. Not only does this tool lead families to more successful schools, it also builds urgency around improving FAFSA completion rates.

The second project is a “To & Through” data visualization tool that allows parents to learn how well a particular high school is doing in educating students to succeed in and graduate from college. (We know that one of the best measures of a high school is whether its students earn a college degree, not whether they graduate or just matriculate at college.) Prior to this project, there was no such public data tool for New York families.

In 2019, we renewed our support of a strategic partnership between three schools in East Harlem—Park East High School, Central Park East High School, and The Heritage School. The schools, which are close to each other and serve predominantly low-income youth, had historically pooled athletic resources into one sports team under the name “East Harlem Pride.” Our funding expanded this collaboration into school improvement and college readiness. Each school has a unique strength: Park East has a successful math program, Central Park East has an outstanding college guidance program, and Heritage has an arts focus. We support each school in meeting its own identified needs while also investing in shared professional development and teaching techniques so that the strengths of each school can be leveraged by the other two. The results of this collaborative are striking. Heritage’s college acceptance rate increased from 35% to 100%, and its college matriculation rate increased from 30% to 95%. Central Park East’s Algebra 2 pass rate increased from 69% to 82%. Heritage’s Algebra 1 pass rate increased from 26% to 38%. Park East’s 18-month college persistence rate increased from 77% to 89% and the percentage of its graduates enrolled in a four-year college increased from 48% to 68%. What started as one math teacher at Park East sharing effective practices for instruction with algebra teachers at Heritage and Central Park East has since expanded to collaborations among all core subjects, select AP courses, and assistant principals. The Young Women’s Leadership School has since joined the partnership.

What if high schools collaborated to share innovations that promote college access?
What would help first-gen students feel like they might belong in college?

We've learned from our own Heckscher Scholars, mentees, and students in grantee organizations that visiting and staying on a college campus offers an unparalleled experience. We conceived of a SUNY Summer Residential Program for low-income, first-generation-to-college New York City high school students aimed at improving the likelihood of their college matriculation and success. In 2019, we continued to support this pilot at the University at Albany and SUNY Potsdam, and added a third campus, SUNY Oswego. Selected in partnership with the SUNY Impact Foundation, each campus offers a three-week summer residential program that includes a transition to college courses, an experiential credit-bearing course, career exploration, and social and recreational activities. Following the summer program, each campus tracks college application and enrollment behavior, and facilitates the application process for those participants who choose to apply to their respective campuses.

Another way we've addressed this question is by connecting incoming low-income, first-generation college students to each other before they arrive on campus. For the past six years, Harlem Educational Activities Fund (HEAF) has organized College Decision Day at the historic Apollo Theater in partnership with 20+ New York City-based college access and success organizations. The event is modeled as a college draft where over 200 graduating high school seniors proudly announce their college choices in front of an audience of cheering families, students, staff, volunteers, and supporters. Leveraging this opportunity of having a significant number of low-income and first-generation college students in one place, we designed a series of regional post-event workshops and dinners so that students headed to the same or nearby schools can network and build relationships with other first-generation students prior to arriving on campus. The workshops include topics such as financial literacy, health and wellness, self-identity, and using failures to produce success. College representatives are invited to attend.

Can a digital innovation encourage family engagement in learning?

Substantial research demonstrates that parental engagement can be a key driver for student success. In 2019, we funded PowerMyLearning (PML) Family Playlists mobile-friendly kindergarten to 8th grade math homework assignments that enable teachers to partner more effectively with families. (One study showed that Family Playlists enabled four months of additional learning.) Our funding specifically supports work with a select number of schools that will serve as sites for research and innovation around the program. With our funding, PML will, among other things, find ways to optimize the teacher adoption process and the “triangle of learning relationships” between students, teachers, and families. The goal of this project is to contribute to PML’s continuous improvement and evidence-building efforts, and to optimize the triangle approach so that it leads to the greatest level of student achievement. Family Playlists is a scalable and affordable solution to improving student outcomes and parental engagement, and it has the potential for exponential growth in New York City across all subjects and grades.
How can we support effective literacy instruction to tackle summer learning loss?

During a typical summer, far too many students experience a three-month regression in reading level. Springboard Collaborative, which harnesses the potential of parent-teacher collaboration to close the literacy gap, was again a grantee in 2019 because of its impressive results. Its flagship five-week summer program not only avoids the regression but replaces it with an average 3.1-month gain. The summer program launched in Philadelphia; we underwrote its expansion to New York City. Now that it has a foothold in New York City charter and public schools, Springboard is rolling out its first after-school program for the 2019-2020 school year. The after-school program is for the bottom quartile of readers for whom summer gains alone will not fully close the reading achievement gap. It combines teacher coaching to differentiate instruction and engage families, small-group instruction, family workshops, and incentives to bolster engagement. Students average a 3.5-month reading gain during the four-month intervention; parent workshops average 99% attendance.

How can we improve faith-based school options for families who want them?

Low-income families in New York City who believe in providing a faith-based education for their children are often faced with limited choices. Catholic schools in particular have faced significant declines and have been less than transparent in terms of ongoing student success in both high school and college admissions. Partnership Schools, a network of Catholic Pre-K through 8th grade schools in Harlem and the South Bronx that we supported in 2019, is committed to reversing these trends.

In 2013, Partnership Schools convinced the Archdiocese of New York to outsource the management of failing Catholic elementary and middle schools to its independent nonprofit. Partnership shifted from focusing solely on providing philanthropic and scholarship support to becoming a school management organization with full management, operational, financial, and academic responsibility for six flagship schools. When Partnership assumed management, only 17% of students passed the New York State math exam and only 22% passed the New York State ELA exam. On the most recent State exams in 2019, 52% of Partnership students passed the math exam and 49% passed the ELA exam. For the fourth year in a row, all Partnership schools met achievement levels that outperformed City and State school averages.

Partnership also developed a comprehensive high school choice matrix that factors in the success of neighboring charter, non-charter, and Catholic high schools in order to counsel families in making better choices. There will be at least two high school placement workshops for middle school students and their parents along with a guide and workbook to prepare for the admissions process. Through this work, Partnership will ensure that at least 75% of qualified 8th grade students apply to more than one school and that, of those schools, at least one is a Tier 1 or Tier 2 school as ranked by Partnership’s internal system. Additionally, Partnership anticipates increasing the average number of students scoring proficient on the 2020 New York State exams by at least 20 percentage points for math and at least 10 percentage points for ELA.
Can more effective tracking tools help schools improve student performance?

Quill is a free, personalized online learning tool that helps middle and high school students build writing, grammar, and proofreading skills. We previously supported a research pilot that implemented Quill’s sentence-combining tool in three Icahn Charter Schools. The findings demonstrated statistically significant increases in writing scores and, although the pilot showed positive gains with limited fidelity, the results would have been even greater with more uniform usage of Quill.

In 2019, we sought to build on these learnings and supported a new cohort of Quill Lab Schools in which Quill can examine their own questions:

• What are the conditions and circumstances under which Quill is most effective?
• How much student progress can be made under optimal conditions?
• How can Quill improve its tools to suit the needs of teachers and students?
• What does it take to shift the culture of a school to a writing culture?
• How does a strong culture of writing affect the school as a whole?

Following the 2019-2020 school year results and feedback from the Quill Lab Schools will offer deep insights into best practices for optimal student outcomes. This grant was co-funded by the Robin Hood Foundation, the Overdeck Family Foundation, and the Siegel Family Endowment to focus on the potential of technology to transform learning in New York City.

Classical Charter Schools serve kindergarten through 8th grade students in the South Bronx and is one of the three highest-performing charter school networks in New York City. Students attending Classical schools have outperformed State, City, and District school students since its inception in 2006: on the 2016-17 state tests, 69% of Classical students passed the ELA exam and 95% passed the math exam compared to a 47% and 43% New York City pass rate, respectively. In 2019, we continued our support of an innovative open source data technology system that can be shared with other school networks. The tool, developed over a three-year period with our support, houses granular student-level academic, behavioral, and attendance data in one place which allows teachers, coaches, and deans to work together to identify conditions that might put a student at academic risk, thus allowing for early intervention. Our support is helping Classical transition from measuring performance and tracking those data points in separate silos (academic, behavioral, demographic, attendance) to managing information and results across these areas. Part of our grant was a condition that Classical make its data technology open source so that other schools can learn from the tools.

New Visions for Public Schools is an organization focused on system-wide improvement efforts in New York City’s public schools. As the support organization for 71 district schools citywide as well as the management organization for ten New Visions Charter High Schools, New Visions has also begun supporting 346 additional schools citywide, at the direction of the NYC Department of Education, with their suite of data tools. With this shift, New Visions data management tools are now used in nearly 40% of New York City’s high schools. The core tool, which our catalytic funding helped create, is the New Visions Data Portal, a comprehensive school management platform built specifically to address the needs of high schools in New York City through the lens of increasing graduation rates. The tool is designed to support schools in making timely and strategic decisions about students and in comprehensively monitoring student progress. In 2019, we supported the expansion of the Portal to include additional functionality related to college advising. New Visions is well-positioned to take this systematic, scaled approach because it has consistently driven increases in graduation and college-readiness rates by solving parallel infrastructure and process challenges related to the assignment of students to activities and supports, and the tracking of the completion of key milestones. It also has the technical expertise to design high-quality software as well as the strategies to develop buy-in among a broad and diverse base of school users. Finally, the infrastructure they are building will be embedded in managerial software which already has an authentic user base among counselors working in New Visions schools.

Can a digital tool help underserved students become better writers?
Can we develop a pathway from middle school to college graduation (from one of the best schools for lifting students out of poverty)?

In order to develop a strong pathway from middle school to a career, we funded the investigation and development of a unique partnership that involves two large middle schools in Queens (MS 216 and MS 217), a career technical high school (Thomas A. Edison), and a non-profit private college (Vaughn College of Aeronautics and Technology) which offers both two- and four-year degrees.

In a study conducted by leading economists and based on millions of anonymous tax records, Vaughn College had one of the highest rates of mobility for its students, which measures the share of children who come from the bottom fifth quintile of family income and move to the top fifth as adults. Well over 90% of Vaughn graduates find gainful employment in careers with substantial salary and career advancement tracks upon graduation. Vaughn also has the capacity to serve more students than it currently does.

With our planning grant, Vaughn and Thomas Edison will work closely to share curriculum, provide opportunities for co-teaching of college-level courses in high school, and collaborate in providing hands-on experiences normally offered in college. The hope is that Vaughn and Thomas Edison will enter into a formal agreement that sets objective standards for granting one year of college credit to those Thomas Edison students who meet the requirements.

Can sports and dance programs enhance a college-going culture?

In 2019, we made catalytic investments in programs that successfully combine sports and the arts to spur interest in academics and college readiness. Since 2005, New Heights has been operating out of shared office space and rented basketball courts and classroom space to operate its programs. As it has grown, New Heights has searched for a permanent and centralized home facility to scale up its athletic and academic programming. They recently finalized a 30-year lease agreement to relocate to the Bedford Union Armory in Crown Heights, Brooklyn. We anchored this capital campaign as the first major foundation funder. New Heights has outstanding results with 100% high school graduation rates, 100% college matriculation rates, and 100% college persistence from year one to year two, and 86% of alumni currently enrolled in four-year colleges on track to graduate within six years.

ROW New York is one of the most successful outcomes-driven programs in New York City. Its programming consists of a year-round mix of competitive rowing instruction and individualized academic support including college-readiness workshops, formal check-in points during students’ first year, visiting students on campus, and connecting students to on-campus resources. BOW New York maintains stellar metrics with an impressive record of 95% of students matriculating to college, an 89% first-year completion rate, and an 85% college graduation rate within six years. We played a central role in the successful efforts of BOW to plan and construct a new community boathouse and learning center which will greatly expand its programs for underserved youth.

STEM From Dance (SFD) delivers school residencies and summer programs in which the art form of dance is used to introduce girls of color ages 12 to 18 to computer science. Participants choreograph a dance that is enhanced with a technological component they learn to code throughout the program. This could be a synchronized animation that serves as a digital backdrop, a musical composition created through coding, or a costume with programmed LED lights to accompany choreography. SFD aims to use the confidence built from dance to prepare minority girls for the social and academic challenges that lie ahead in STEM.
How can we sustain experiential learning programs that prepare underserved youth for college?

Global Glimpse centers around a three-week summer experience in a developing country (such as Ecuador, the Dominican Republic, or Panama), with an extensive curriculum covering history, politics, culture, poverty, business, education, and development. The program targets high-potential, low-income 11th graders who demonstrate leadership qualities and have a minimum GPA of 3.0; they are also required to conduct 40 hours of community service prior to the summer experience. Participants remain engaged in the program as 12th graders through one-on-one mentoring with the incoming cohort of 11th graders, community service projects, and supplementary academic workshops that emphasize college essay support.

Though not a traditional college prep program, Global Glimpse’s experiential learning program yields academic gains: 80% of participants write their college essay on the experience; 100% graduate from high school; 80% matriculate to two-year colleges, with an additional 15% to four-year colleges; and 97% are persisting in college.

With our three-year commitment to expand the program as the catalyst, Global Glimpse is moving closer to serving 50 to 60% low-income and 40 to 50% affluent students (who pay full cost). Global Glimpse also solidified a high-level national partnership with United Airlines, which covers all air travel costs, provides additional in-kind support for program expansion through teacher incentive strategies, and invests in marketing to raise awareness around the partnership. In 2020, program revenue will exceed 85% of operating costs while serving 1,500 students, increasing to 58% in 2021 while serving 1,700 students.

We’ve encouraged college access programs to share best practices and expand their reach by training other organizations in what they do and how. Over eight years, College Access: Research & Action (CARA) has developed and refined college access and persistence programming in more than 100 high schools, nine CUNY community colleges, and 14 community-based organizations. In 2019, we provided funding that allowed CARA to develop more strategic partnerships—one that would be sustainable beyond CARA’s active involvement. The approach for this includes extensive consultation with program leadership to determine the best ways to integrate CARA models and resources into existing structures and practices, and ensures dedication of needed resources; distribution of CARA’s high-quality resources and the modeling of their use; and professional development to implement programming with fidelity. Schools that have partnered with CARA, with our support, and implemented both programs for at least three years have seen an increase of up to 20% in post-secondary matriculation rates, and an increase of up to 10% higher than those of peer comparison schools in New York City.
Be Bold... Through College
How can we help public college students keep their credits when they transfer schools?

Over a third of college students transfer at least once yet, according to a 2018 Government Accountability Office report, approximately 43% of credits earned at a previous institution are lost when students transfer. Economically disadvantaged students suffer disproportionately; lost credits often result in students running out of financial aid before they have enough credits to graduate.

In a major area of study to graduate. Economically disadvantaged students suffer credit loss even when they transfer, he/she has, in effect, “wasted” essential federal and state financial aid and is likely to run out of aid before reaching graduation. In 2018, we supported an innovative project in collaboration with Hostos Community College, Lehman Community College, and the CUNY Office of Institutional Research and Assessment, supervised by Dhaka 8BY. The project team is working to improve credit evaluation and student advising processes and to get better information on course equivalencies into the hands of students and administrators sooner. The goals are to dramatically cut the time it takes to evaluate transfer credits, significantly reduce the percentage of transfer credits that do not count toward a degree, and virtually eliminate credit evaluation decisions that go against policy, all of which will lead to a higher degree completion rate for transfer students between these two colleges. If the project is successful, it will provide a road map to expand it to other campuses.

Could an emergency grant be the thing that keeps a college student on track to graduate?

The financial aid system often falls short when it comes to supporting students who are at risk of dropping out of school because of financial crises caused by, or that result in, unexpected one-time expenses. These include rent, insurance, medical expenses, homelessness or threat of eviction, and back-up transportation or car repairs. One-time costs associated with these sudden events are often less than $1,500.

In 2019, we supported an innovative project in collaboration with the Gerstner Family Foundation—the SUNY Student Emergency Fund—at six SUNY campuses. For most New York City underserved students who wish to attend college away from home, SUNY is the most accessible and cost-effective option. The Fund has already shown dramatic impact. Of the 120 students in the first cohort receiving aid in spring 2018, 87.5% persisted or graduated from a two- or four-year college by spring 2019. In the second cohort, of the 170 fall 2018 recipients, 90.6% persisted or graduated by spring 2019.

Courses are also seeing a catalytic impact of this grant, including an increase in fundraising from other sources (with one senior class donating its senior gift to the program) and increases in the number of students in need coming forward for help and obtaining other forms of campus assistance.

The SUNY Student Emergency Fund administers the program, collects data, and studies the effects of the funding. Grants were awarded to SUNY campuses and the SUNY SPS. In the first cohort, 56% of grants funded rent, 85% paid tuition, 33% paid car repairs, and 4% paid utilities. In the second cohort, 50% of grants funded rent, 91% paid tuition, 25% paid car repairs, and 4% paid utilities. The SUNY Impact Foundation manages the grant, collects data, and studies the effects of the funding. Grants were awarded to SUNY campuses and SUNY SPS. In the first cohort, 56% of grants funded rent, 85% paid tuition, 33% paid car repairs, and 4% paid utilities. In the second cohort, 50% of grants funded rent, 91% paid tuition, 25% paid car repairs, and 4% paid utilities.

The SUNY Impact Foundation administers the program, collects data, and studies the effects of the funding. Grants were awarded to SUNY campuses and SUNY SPS. In the first cohort, 56% of grants funded rent, 85% paid tuition, 33% paid car repairs, and 4% paid utilities. In the second cohort, 50% of grants funded rent, 91% paid tuition, 25% paid car repairs, and 4% paid utilities.

Could an emergency grant be the thing that keeps a college student on track to graduate?

The financial aid system often falls short when it comes to supporting students who are at risk of dropping out of school because of financial crises caused by, or that result in, unexpected one-time expenses. These include rent, insurance, medical expenses, homelessness or threat of eviction, and back-up transportation or car repairs. One-time costs associated with these sudden events are often less than $1,500.

In 2019, we supported an innovative project in collaboration with the Gerstner Family Foundation—the SUNY Student Emergency Fund—at six SUNY campuses. For most New York City underserved students who wish to attend college away from home, SUNY is the most accessible and cost-effective option. The Fund has already shown dramatic impact. Of the 120 students in the first cohort receiving aid in spring 2018, 87.5% persisted or graduated from a two- or four-year college by spring 2019. In the second cohort, of the 170 fall 2018 recipients, 90.6% persisted or graduated by spring 2019.

Courses are also seeing a catalytic impact of this grant, including an increase in fundraising from other sources (with one senior class donating its senior gift to the program) and increases in the number of students in need coming forward for help and obtaining other forms of campus assistance.

The SUNY Impact Foundation administers the program, collects data, and studies the effects of the funding. Grants were awarded to SUNY campuses and SUNY SPS. In the first cohort, 56% of grants funded rent, 85% paid tuition, 33% paid car repairs, and 4% paid utilities. In the second cohort, 50% of grants funded rent, 91% paid tuition, 25% paid car repairs, and 4% paid utilities.

The SUNY Impact Foundation administers the program, collects data, and studies the effects of the funding. Grants were awarded to SUNY campuses and SUNY SPS. In the first cohort, 56% of grants funded rent, 85% paid tuition, 33% paid car repairs, and 4% paid utilities. In the second cohort, 50% of grants funded rent, 91% paid tuition, 25% paid car repairs, and 4% paid utilities.

The SUNY Impact Foundation administers the program, collects data, and studies the effects of the funding. Grants were awarded to SUNY campuses and SUNY SPS. In the first cohort, 56% of grants funded rent, 85% paid tuition, 33% paid car repairs, and 4% paid utilities. In the second cohort, 50% of grants funded rent, 91% paid tuition, 25% paid car repairs, and 4% paid utilities.

The SUNY Impact Foundation administers the program, collects data, and studies the effects of the funding. Grants were awarded to SUNY campuses and SUNY SPS. In the first cohort, 56% of grants funded rent, 85% paid tuition, 33% paid car repairs, and 4% paid utilities. In the second cohort, 50% of grants funded rent, 91% paid tuition, 25% paid car repairs, and 4% paid utilities.

The SUNY Impact Foundation administers the program, collects data, and studies the effects of the funding. Grants were awarded to SUNY campuses and SUNY SPS. In the first cohort, 56% of grants funded rent, 85% paid tuition, 33% paid car repairs, and 4% paid utilities. In the second cohort, 50% of grants funded rent, 91% paid tuition, 25% paid car repairs, and 4% paid utilities.

Could an emergency grant be the thing that keeps a college student on track to graduate?

The financial aid system often falls short when it comes to supporting students who are at risk of dropping out of school because of financial crises caused by, or that result in, unexpected one-time expenses. These include rent, insurance, medical expenses, homelessness or threat of eviction, and back-up transportation or car repairs. One-time costs associated with these sudden events are often less than $1,500.

In 2019, we supported an innovative project in collaboration with the Gerstner Family Foundation—the SUNY Student Emergency Fund—at six SUNY campuses. For most New York City underserved students who wish to attend college away from home, SUNY is the most accessible and cost-effective option. The Fund has already shown dramatic impact. Of the 120 students in the first cohort receiving aid in spring 2018, 87.5% persisted or graduated from a two- or four-year college by spring 2019. In the second cohort, of the 170 fall 2018 recipients, 90.6% persisted or graduated by spring 2019.

Courses are also seeing a catalytic impact of this grant, including an increase in fundraising from other sources (with one senior class donating its senior gift to the program) and increases in the number of students in need coming forward for help and obtaining other forms of campus assistance.

The SUNY Impact Foundation administers the program, collects data, and studies the effects of the funding. Grants were awarded to SUNY campuses and SUNY SPS. In the first cohort, 56% of grants funded rent, 85% paid tuition, 33% paid car repairs, and 4% paid utilities. In the second cohort, 50% of grants funded rent, 91% paid tuition, 25% paid car repairs, and 4% paid utilities.

The SUNY Impact Foundation administers the program, collects data, and studies the effects of the funding. Grants were awarded to SUNY campuses and SUNY SPS. In the first cohort, 56% of grants funded rent, 85% paid tuition, 33% paid car repairs, and 4% paid utilities. In the second cohort, 50% of grants funded rent, 91% paid tuition, 25% paid car repairs, and 4% paid utilities.

The SUNY Impact Foundation administers the program, collects data, and studies the effects of the funding. Grants were awarded to SUNY campuses and SUNY SPS. In the first cohort, 56% of grants funded rent, 85% paid tuition, 33% paid car repairs, and 4% paid utilities. In the second cohort, 50% of grants funded rent, 91% paid tuition, 25% paid car repairs, and 4% paid utilities.

The SUNY Impact Foundation administers the program, collects data, and studies the effects of the funding. Grants were awarded to SUNY campuses and SUNY SPS. In the first cohort, 56% of grants funded rent, 85% paid tuition, 33% paid car repairs, and 4% paid utilities. In the second cohort, 50% of grants funded rent, 91% paid tuition, 25% paid car repairs, and 4% paid utilities.

The SUNY Impact Foundation administers the program, collects data, and studies the effects of the funding. Grants were awarded to SUNY campuses and SUNY SPS. In the first cohort, 56% of grants funded rent, 85% paid tuition, 33% paid car repairs, and 4% paid utilities. In the second cohort, 50% of grants funded rent, 91% paid tuition, 25% paid car repairs, and 4% paid utilities.

The SUNY Impact Foundation administers the program, collects data, and studies the effects of the funding. Grants were awarded to SUNY campuses and SUNY SPS. In the first cohort, 56% of grants funded rent, 85% paid tuition, 33% paid car repairs, and 4% paid utilities. In the second cohort, 50% of grants funded rent, 91% paid tuition, 25% paid car repairs, and 4% paid utilities.

The SUNY Impact Foundation administers the program, collects data, and studies the effects of the funding. Grants were awarded to SUNY campuses and SUNY SPS. In the first cohort, 56% of grants funded rent, 85% paid tuition, 33% paid car repairs, and 4% paid utilities. In the second cohort, 50% of grants funded rent, 91% paid tuition, 25% paid car repairs, and 4% paid utilities.

The SUNY Impact Foundation administers the program, collects data, and studies the effects of the funding. Grants were awarded to SUNY campuses and SUNY SPS. In the first cohort, 56% of grants funded rent, 85% paid tuition, 33% paid car repairs, and 4% paid utilities. In the second cohort, 50% of grants funded rent, 91% paid tuition, 25% paid car repairs, and 4% paid utilities.
Are public dollars accessible for pay-for-success programs that promote college persistence?

We initiated and funded the first “pay for success” college persistence program in New York which involves Bottom Line and Lehman College. Bottom Line is providing college persistence services at Lehman College and, if certain benchmarks are reached, Lehman and the Office of Institutional Effectiveness (OIE) agreed to pay part of the costs of the services. The goal is to replicate this cost-sharing model with other college partners to ensure sustainability, and to increase student reach while maintaining high-quality services. Bottom Line fills a gaping hole in the suite of college-focused programs in New York City by focusing on successful college completion in addition to college access support for mid-achieving students who are not necessarily accessing top-tier institutions. These students are realizing exceptional college persistence rates thanks to Bottom Line’s hands-on guidance at its 21 partner colleges in or near New York City. Nationally, Bottom Line has achieved a historic college graduation rate of 79% and the program is on track to replicate that success in New York.

In 2019, we provided major support to fund strategic partnerships fueling the growth of America Needs You (ANY), which offers intensive career development and leadership training that enables high-potential, low-income, first-generation college students to persist in college, earn a degree, and secure a meaningful job. In New York, ANY serves CUNY students, one-third of whom start out at a two-year college, because they have been identified as having the highest need for intervention. We funded strategic partnerships between ANY and two CUNY campuses: LaGuardia Community College and Borough of Manhattan Community College. This partnership enables ANY to operate under a cost-sharing model in which it pays 80% of expenses while the campuses pay 20% plus provide resources that include workshop spaces and on-campus desks where ANY staff can provide consistent support to students. To ensure year-over-year persistence and bachelor’s degree completion, ANY supports students as they transition from two-year to four-year colleges and throughout their college career—and it has achieved results that position it as the most effective model for college-completion programs for CUNY students. Of the ANY fellows enrolled in community colleges, 87% transferred to four-year universities, 94% of alumni have graduated within six years, and 92% have secured jobs or have enrolled full-time in graduate school. In comparison, CUNY’s three-year graduation rate for community colleges is 22% and six-year graduation rate for senior colleges is 55%.

Borough of Manhattan Community College (BMCC) is the largest community college in the CUNY system with 27,000 degree-seeking students but with a three-year graduation rate of only 22%. In 2015, we committed to doubling the size of BMCC’s IMPACT Peer Mentoring program because assessments conducted by BMCC’s Office of Institutional Effectiveness and Analytics show that it produces consistently higher retention and graduation rates for both mentors and mentees as compared with similarly-situated students not in the program as well as higher credit accumulation numbers in each semester tracked before graduation (e.g. 11.9 credits in the second-year spring term, compared with 6.9 credits for similar students). In 2019, we also continued to fund The College Completion Innovation Fund through Graduate NYC with the goal of fostering collaboration among foundations in the college access and persistence space. The Fund aims to significantly increase college graduation rates throughout the five boroughs by harnessing the collective expertise and impact of a wide range of philanthropic and educational organizations. The Fund makes grants to support undergraduate colleges and nonprofit community-based organizations in implementing innovative programs that address the graduation challenges faced by underrepresented student populations. In addition to its role in catalyzing innovation and expanding successful practices, the Fund also provides professional development and technical assistance to its grantees and facilitates ongoing dialogue related to increasing degree attainment in New York City. The Fund seeks to promote effective practices that have proven successful in local contexts—ones that may be scaled in other locations across the city—and to fund strategic partnerships fueling the growth of America Needs You (ANY), which offers intensive career development and leadership training that enables high-potential, low-income, first-generation college students to persist in college, earn a degree, and secure a meaningful job.

In 2019, we also continued to fund The College Completion Innovation Fund through Graduate NYC with the goal of fostering collaboration among foundations in the college access and persistence space. The Fund aims to significantly increase college graduation rates throughout the five boroughs by harnessing the collective expertise and impact of a wide range of philanthropic and educational organizations. The Fund makes grants to support undergraduate colleges and nonprofit community-based organizations in implementing innovative programs that address the graduation challenges faced by underrepresented student populations. In addition to its role in catalyzing innovation and expanding successful practices, the Fund also provides professional development and technical assistance to its grantees and facilitates ongoing dialogue related to increasing degree attainment in New York City. The Fund seeks to promote effective practices that have proven successful in local contexts—ones that may be scaled in other locations across the city—and to fund strategic partnerships fueling the growth of America Needs You (ANY), which offers intensive career development and leadership training that enables high-potential, low-income, first-generation college students to persist in college, earn a degree, and secure a meaningful job.
Be Bold...
Beyond College
What are the best ways to engage for-profit companies in building pathways to real jobs for underserved youth?

We believe that employer commitments to job pathways, and not just internships, are essential. These commitments should include defining job skills, assisting in the design of curriculum, and providing jobs training—and they should lead to a real job at a livable wage.

In 2019, we helped fund the launch of Braven in New York City through a partnership with Lehman College. Braven is a career success program that builds cutting-edge career education into the under-graduate experience for low-income and first-generation students. A credit-bearing course is followed by an experience that lasts through graduation and includes volunteer professionals leading teams of fellows through weekly in-person Learning Labs, where real-world application of concepts and feedback, plus social capital, is shared. A key component of Braven’s growth and long-term sustainability is increased earned revenue streams from university and employer partners with the goal of having universities, employers, and donors each contributing one-third of total revenue. For the 2020 New York City launch, CUNY Central is covering approximately one-third of the pupil cost while Lehman College is supporting joint fundraising efforts to cover the remainder of the cost. CUNY will also provide a research grant to help evaluate the impact of the work.

We will be tracking not only program completion but long-term attainment of a strong job (defined as a job that requires a bachelor’s degree, is full-time, and offers a competitive starting salary with pathways to promotion). To date, 69% of Braven fellows in other program sites have secured quality full-time jobs or enrolled in graduate school within six months of graduation. In 2019, through direct conversations with employers, we identified the automotive industry as one in high need of qualified employees. We then created a pilot program at Bronx Community College (BCC), the only CUNY school with an Automotive and Technology Program, to provide supplemental exam prep to prepare students for the first four of eight National Institute for Automotive Excellence (ASE) exams. Upon earning these four certifications, students will be halfway to becoming certified ASE Master Technicians which will make them significantly more employable upon graduation. BCC has a partnership with the Nissan Technician Academy, creating a structured pathway for students who achieve certification. BCC anticipates that 85% of its students who sit for the exams will earn certification.

In 2019, we again supported COOP, an apprenticeship and job placement program based in New York City that targets underserved and underemployed CUNY students and recent graduates with a clear career path into the digital media industry. COOP partners with multiple CUNY colleges (Baruch, Brooklyn, City, Lehman, and Guttman) as well as community-based organizations entrenched in the CUNY system to find high-potential but underemployed students or recent graduates in need of direction for full-time employment opportunities with upward mobility. Unlike other programs, COOP has built its own network of successful graduates working at digital employers such as Google, Microsoft, and Oath (formerly Yahoo) who provide referrals to employment for current COOP students—an alternative pathway to the traditional networks that have persisted at employers and been an impediment to jobs pathways for those from less traditional backgrounds. The typical COOP candidate graduates six to twelve months before joining the program and earns an average of $15,000 per year. Participants are placed in a four-month training program and engage in 200 hours of training on data analytics or digital marketing skills, soft skills, and project-based learning through client partnerships. Trainings are held at night two to four times a week so that participants can maintain part-time jobs during the day. Following program completion, participants are earning, on average, $45,000 in year one and $70,000 by year four. Since the program launched in 2014, COOP has served over 500 participants (over 85% of whom are minorities and more than half of whom are first-generation college students), 80% of whom have launched full-time careers in tech, design, and media.

For four years now, we have funded a strategic partnership between The Door and the Gap Foundation, which together sponsor This Way Ahead (TWA), a youth workforce initiative that combines The Door’s extensive expertise in youth development and job training with retail-specific expertise and employment from Gap Inc. Through this program, youth participate in a four-week Basic Retail and Customer Training, a customized four-week TWA Boot Camp, and a four-month paid internship at a Gap Inc. store. Those who complete internships and meet objective metrics are offered employment at Gap Inc. In the first three cohorts, 91% of youth completed the internship and 80% were offered employment.
Be Bold...
Building
CAPACITY & INFRASTRUCTURE
How do we help nonprofits develop their own internal capacity to grow?

We have identified outstanding consultants who help nonprofits grow and have supported their work on behalf of our grantees. These include revenue generation, employee hiring, board and internal management, and capacity building.

Our strategic partnership with Arbor Brothers has connected 26 nonprofits in New York City with hands-on consulting services. Arbor Brothers identifies, funds, and assists promising education and workforce development nonprofits in the New York metro area, and assists in the creation of management tools and strategic plans. Arbor Brothers selects a cohort of the most promising second-stage nonprofits each year that address root causes of poverty. Each grantee in their portfolio receives 250 hours of engagement on their model and program strategies. Over the last five years, Arbor Brothers grantees have had an 80% success rate in securing support from deep-vetting “signature funders” including Robin Hood, New Profit, the Emerson Collective, and Edna McConnell Clark. Additionally, after three years with Arbor Brothers, the median grantee more than triples the number of young people it serves as well as doubles its revenue.

RevJen works with nonprofit leadership teams in a collaborative peer-learning environment focused on building organizational approaches to revenue-generation. We formed a strategic partnership with RevJen to sponsor nonprofits’ participation in RevJen’s “Build a Revenue Generation That Works.” This program equips participants with an understanding of the fundamental drivers of revenue-generation and with concrete actions they can take to improve the economic sustainability of their organizations. The model requires that three to four senior leadership members from each organization participate in three full-day training sessions, held two to three weeks apart. Each organization leaves with an action plan to build a more sustainable revenue-generation foundation specific to their organization. In 2019 based on participant feedback, we supported part of a larger trial of 50 nonprofits participating in RevJen programming in New York City.

In the past, we also supported Cause Strategy Partners, gbSMART, and SeaChange Capital Partners in the area of capacity building and technical assistance.
Explore our essay series at heckscherfoundation.org

Promoting Informed Choice and Greater Transparency in Education Funding

By Peter Sloane
Chairman and CEO
Heckscher Foundation for Children

Underprivileged families have a fundamental civil right to make an informed choice about where their children should attend high school. Information that provides objective measures of high schools’ performance — how they stack up in successfully preparing students for completing college, for example — is essential in helping those who would benefit from greater transparency, principally the underserved, to weigh the many factors that impact their school choice.

We know that the surest path out of poverty is a college degree, and we know data exist about which high schools are doing well at helping poor kids achieve that goal. Yet, this information is largely focused and where there is districtwide high school choice, by investing in the development of digital tools that make crucial school-related information widely available. These solutions, examples of what we call targeted problem solving, address systemic inequities and level the playing field where one decision — which high school to attend — has significant consequences for low-income students.

We funded three projects that look at different measures of high school performance in preparing students for success and college attendance. Financial aid application completion, and college completion rates linked back to the high school level.

To better understand how information can help students access higher-performing high schools, we first funded the creation of the NYC High School Application Guide, a free online tool and mobile app that helps students identify high schools with strong graduation rates from among the 750 programs and more than 440 high schools in the district. At the time we developed the Guide, students and families were being directed to a city Department of Education or to a web source that did not allow for searching of schools by criteria important to individual students.

In a randomized controlled trial conducted at the time the Guide was introduced, we showed that students who used it were more likely to receive their first-choice high school and less likely to match to a school with a graduation rate below 70 percent. Since our funding began, several new tools have been created, and experts in this area have credited our Guide as the impetus for the development of these improved tools.

Next, we looked at financial aid application completion rates. Consider that 90 percent of high school seniors who complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid — FAFSA — go on to college immediately after graduation, compared with just 55 percent who do not. It would benefit parents of low-income and first-generation college hopefuls, then, to know whether a prospective high school has a strong record of FAFSA completion rates. Now they can.

We provided funding that enabled The Education Trust-New York to develop an online data visualization tool around FAFSA completion rates for each public high school in each district in New York State. With this tool, a school’s FAFSA completion rate can be benchmarked against similar schools’ (based on share of low-income students) and top performers’, and the performance of entire school districts as well as all schools within a district can be reviewed. The tool pinpoints success stories so that effective financial aid application strategies and practices can be more broadly applied (and perhaps New Yorkers will no longer miss out on an estimated $152 million in federal financial aid by not filling out the form), but it also provides transparency so parents can know where to advocate for better results and, perhaps, which schools or districts to avoid, if they can.

We know that one of the best measures of a high school is whether its students earn a college degree, not whether they graduate from high school or just matriculate at college. Yet, no such public data tool has existed in New York City, even though the data itself have long been a closely guarded secret within city education circles. Essentially, there was no way for parents to learn how many students from a particular high school persisted and graduated from college — information that would enable them to make a more informed decision about where to enroll their child.

As a workaround solution, we conceived of a project for New York City modeled after the University of Chicago’s long-standing To&Through Project. The project identifies key milestones — college persistence and graduation — and then publicly reports on the data by high school.

Working again with The Education Trust-New York, we designed our own To & Through tool to reframe college readiness around long-term student success outcomes and to identify key inflection points that enable student success with the goal of providing transparency and K-12 accountability.

Drawing on data from New York’s financial aid agency, the Higher Education Services Corp., Ed Trust-NY created a visualization tool linking high schools to college persistence and degree data. (The data universe is limited to students who enrolled in a New York college or university the fall after their high school graduation and participated in the state’s Tuition Assistance Program, which provides grants to families with taxable incomes of up to $80,000, therefore including low-income students attending both private and public in-state universities.) These three investments have made critical school data both transparent and accessible so that all families in New York City and throughout the state can make better-informed choices when it comes to selecting the best high schools for their children.

We believe that leaders in philanthropy and government can and should do more to support similar tools that promote informed education choice. Try, for example, to uncover up-to-date persistence rates at New York public colleges instead of rates that are years out of date, or the transfer credit practices for major areas of study at senior colleges in most states, including New York. This information is known; it’s just not shared publicly. Whatever the reasons for this, and there are many, we believe in breaking down the barriers to a paternalistic approach to information-sharing in education.
Selected 2019 Grantees

Academy for Careers in Television and Film
America Needs You
Arbor Brothers
Atlantic Theater Company
Boston Children’s Hospital
Braven
Breakthrough Miami
Bronx High School for Law and Community Service
Brooklyn Animal Resource Coalition
Candid
Central Park Conservancy
Chalkbeat
Change Summer
Chess in the Schools
Children’s Aid
Children’s Museum of Manhattan
Citizens Union
City University of New York
Borough of Manhattan Community College
Bronx Community College
Graduate NYC
Hostos Community College
Lehman College
School of Professional Studies
Classical Charter Schools
College Access: Research & Action
Coney Island Prep
COOP Careers
De La Salle Academy
The Door
Dutchess Day School
The Education Trust-New York
Epic Theatre Ensemble
Exalt Youth
Figure Skating in Harlem
Florida Atlantic University Foundation, Inc.
Friends of Central Park
East High School
Friends of Karen
Getting Out and Staying Out
Girls Educational & Mentoring Services
Global Glimpse
Goddard Riverside Community Center
Good Shepherd Services
Grantmakers for Education
Harlem Educational Activities Fund
Harvard Summer Institute on College Admissions
The Heritage School
Institute for Health Professions at Cambia Heights
In-Tech Academy
Ithaca College
Ithaka S+R
Keewaydin Foundation
Knowledge and Power
Preparatory Academy
International High School
The Laboratory School of Finance & Technology
The Louis August Jonas Foundation
Marble Hill School for International Studies
Maria I. New Children’s Hormone Foundation
MICRO
MS 216 George J. Ryan
MS 217 Robert A. Van Wyck
National Dance Institute
New Heights Youth, Inc.
New Rochelle Campership Fund
New Visions for Public Schools
NYC Salt
The Opportunity Network
Park East High School
Partners
Philanthropy New York
PowerMyLearning
Quality Services for the Autism Community
Quill
Red Hook Initiative
RevJen
Room to Grow
Roots & Wings
ROW New York
Scholarship America
SeaChange Capital Partners
South Bronx United
Special Olympics New York, Inc.
Springboard Collaborative
State University of New York
Theatre Arts Production Company School
Thelma Gaylord Performing Arts Theatre
University of Michigan
University of Pennsylvania
University of Virginia
William and Mary
Young People’s Project
York College
Young Women’s Leadership Academy

Expeditionary Learning School
Yale School of Public Health
Young Men’s & Young Women’s Hebrew Association

HECKSCHER FOUNDATION for CHILDREN

ABOUT US

For nearly 100 years, the Heckscher Foundation for Children has worked to level the playing field for underserved youth, principally in New York. We focus our giving on education: programs, partnerships, and targeted solutions in college access and success, workforce training and jobs access, and arts or physical education that improves achievement in the classroom. Our venture philanthropy approach uses three principal strategies—catalytic giving, strategic partnerships, and targeted problem solving—that look for inflection points where we have the potential to change the course of a young person’s life at a key juncture.

HECKSCHER SCHOLARS

We have a realistic view, through hands-on experience, of what it takes to complete college and we designed our in-house Heckscher Scholars program accordingly. We admit high-potential New York City public high school students facing challenges in gaining admission to and graduating from college. Our personalized guidance matches them with the colleges they deserve and the financial aid they need. We provide mentoring, small-group tutoring, a month-long extended-day summer program with private tutors and teachers from the best independent schools in the city, and summer opportunities to take a paid internship or travel abroad through our partnership with Global Glimpse. We also teach college success and life skills, from learning to drive and swim to interviewing skills.

In the eleven years that our program has existed, 90% of Scholars have graduated from competitive private and public colleges and universities. In 2019, all Scholars matriculated at four-year colleges—including Babson, Barnard, Cornell, Fordham, Middlebury, Rochester, Skidmore, and numerous SUNY schools—with substantial financial aid.

BOARD

Howard G. (Peter) Sloane
Chairman
Hilary Azrael
Mark E. Beck
Brian Feinstein
Daniel Laub
Philippe Laub
Gar Meyers
Kathryn Meyers
Matt Perelman
Alexander Sloane
Jude Sloane
Nassia Kushner
Arthur Smadbeck
Jeffrey Smadbeck
Leigh Smadbeck
Louis Smadbeck
Louis Smadbeck, Jr.
Mark Smadbeck
Paul Smadbeck
Alexander Taubman
David Tillson

STAFF

Howard G. (Peter) Sloane
Chief Executive Officer

Ourania Vokolos-Zias
Chief Operating Officer

Cara Bowen
Program Officer

Shelby Abell
Program Officer

Ashley Dunn
Grants Manager

Geoffrey Howarth
Director, Heckscher Scholars

Christina Figueroa
Facilities Manager and Bookkeeper

Alysia George
Receptionist and Administrative Assistant

ADVISORS

Stella Fiore
Senior Communications Advisor

Nassia Kushner
Senior Advisor

Giselle Robledo
Heckscher Scholars Student Affairs Coordinator

HECKSCHER FOUNDATION
for CHILDREN

123 East 70th Street
New York, NY 10021
Tel. 212.744.0990
heckscherrf.org

Design by ETC
Printed by Linco on recyclable 30 lb newsprint.

Photography for this work is reprinted with permission.