



CCRC COMMUNITY COLLEGE
RESEARCH CENTER
Teachers College, Columbia University



2024-2026 Biennial Report

Director's Letter

Dear Colleague,

In late 1995, Jesse Ausubel, then a program manager at the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation, reached out to Tom Bailey, then a professor of economics and education at Teachers College (and now its president), to talk over an idea: creating a research center focused on community colleges. They discussed how community colleges played an important role in higher education but were underappreciated. The colleges enrolled over 40% of the nation's undergraduates, yet little was known about the programs they offered or the students they served. From this conversation, the Sloan Foundation made a grant to establish the Community College Research Center (CCRC) in August 1996.

In the early days, CCRC focused on understanding the community college mission, the characteristics of their students, and the delivery of occupational training and developmental (or remedial) instruction. A landmark study in 2009 found that most students who were assigned to developmental education never advanced to college-level work. This discovery prompted many colleges to rethink the role of developmental education and to work with CCRC to test approaches that might lead to better outcomes.

CCRC's research expanded to include student advising, teaching and learning, and other topics. In 2015, a book by Bailey and colleagues, *Redesigning America's Community Colleges*, synthesized research findings and laid the groundwork for whole-college reforms known as guided pathways. The authors argued that community colleges gave students too little direction, and they encouraged colleges to be more proactive in making sure every student has an academic plan and receives the advising and support needed to earn a credential in a reasonable amount of time. Since the book's release, more than 400 colleges have participated in guided pathways initiatives. In a new book published in 2025, *More Essential Than Ever: Community College Pathways to Educational and Career Success*, Davis Jenkins and colleagues describe how the most successful colleges have implemented guided pathways and offer research-based advice on how to build pathways that lead directly to good jobs or baccalaureate degree programs.

As these examples illustrate, CCRC's approach to building knowledge is cumulative and would not be possible without the many institutions that are willing to take a close look at what is working (or not) and risk trying new approaches. Equally important are the national organizations, other researchers, and funders who partner on every aspect of CCRC's research, from designing studies to disseminating results.

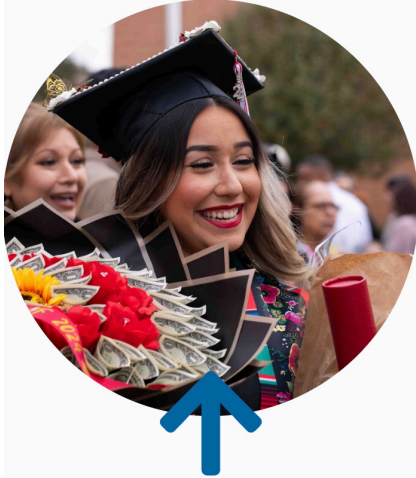
This biennial report describes some of CCRC's accomplishments and new projects getting underway. As we approach our 30th anniversary in 2026, we look forward to building on this knowledge base and tackling new challenges, always with the intention of helping more students benefit from their community college experience. We appreciate your interest in our work and welcome feedback on how we can best meet the needs of the field.

Sincerely,



Tom Brock

Measures of Community College Progress



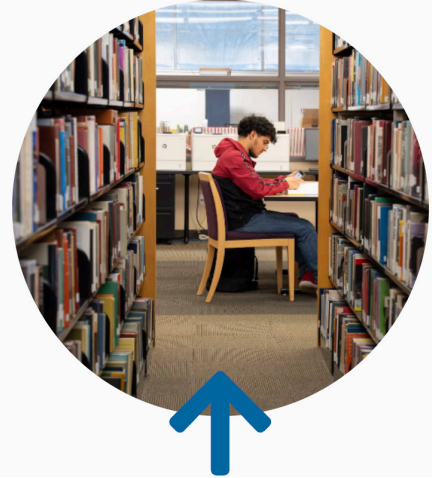
Stronger Completion Outcomes

Six-year completion rate increased among credit students from 36% in 2012 to 43% in 2024.



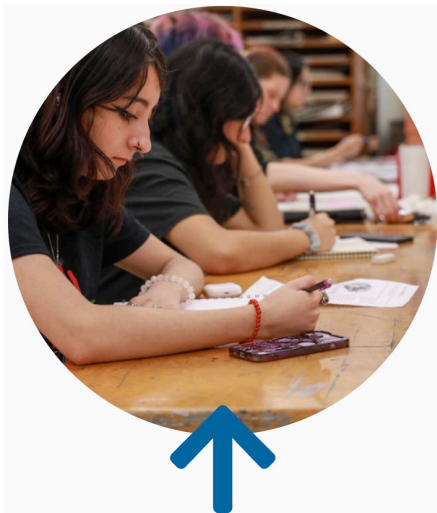
Less Developmental Coursework

Students who take prerequisite developmental coursework decreased from 56% in 2015-16 to 40% in 2019-20.



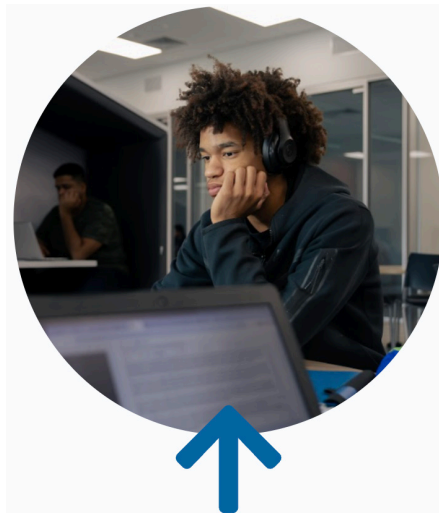
More Targeted Placement

Colleges that consider high school performance when placing students in math increased from 41% in 2016 to 73% in 2023



Added Bachelor's Degrees

Colleges that offer bachelor's programs increased from fewer than 15 colleges in four states in the 1990s to 187 colleges in 24 states in 2023.



Expanded Dual Enrollment

Number of community college dual enrollment students increased from 326,000 in the early 2000s to 1.78 million in 2023.

CCRC Researchers Discuss Their Work:

What Surprised Me About My Research

[Watch video >](#)

Selena Cho

Senior Research Assistant | CCRC

Community colleges do everything from dual enrollment for high school students to adult and continuing education. Sometimes certain programs or types of courses get duplicated across different parts of the college. In some ways this is really awesome. But also, it can lead down the line to some inefficiencies.



CJ Libassi

Senior Research Assistant & PEAR Fellow | CCRC

We tried to get more students to go to the University of Michigan, especially more low-income students. That really opened my eyes to how many talented, smart students there were on community college campuses and how much that seems to be a result of just the more welcoming environment that those institutions provide.



Tatiana Velasco

Senior Research Associate | CCRC

I think that for me the most shocking fact from the transfer research was that so many community college students effectively wanted to get a bachelor's, but consistently over the last 10 years or more only 15-16% of them, according to our more recent data, get to complete a bachelor's.



Aurely Garcia Tulloch

Senior Research Assistant | CCRC

Something that is really interesting about the research that I do on dual enrollment is how much it intersects with the transfer research that we do—specifically when I'm talking with folks about what happens to former dual enrollment students and where their credits transfer. What's happening? What are their advising experiences and what does it look like once they get to college?



Amy E. Brown

Research Associate | CCRC

I was really surprised when I got to CCRC to learn that there's really limited research happening and research funding for projects that are focused on teaching and learning in higher ed. Students spend so much time with faculty, if you think about who they interact with most at the institution and how important the knowledge, skills, relationships, and ways of knowing are that they gain from college.



Carl Lewandowski

Research Assistant | CCRC

Doing a focus group with some faculty who had participated in a professional development opportunity, one of the instructors mentioned that what was most beneficial for him was just getting the opportunity to talk to other faculty. And it made me think in new ways about how our research could be bringing people together.

How Colleges and States Use CCRC Research



From reforming developmental education through implementing accelerated learning, the corequisite model, and multiple measures for placement, and on to the scaled implementation of very successful Guided Pathways 1.0, Wallace State has relied upon the stellar research of the Community College Research Center to inform our work. We trust CCRC to produce timely research on topics that matter most to community colleges.

Vicki Karolewics

President,
Wallace State Community College, Alabama



At St. Petersburg College, we utilize research from CCRC to guide and enhance our student success initiatives, particularly in the implementation and facilitation of guided pathways—from curriculum design and program mapping to advising reform. We also use CCRC research to strengthen students' post-graduation success and to make data-informed decisions aimed at improving student outcomes such as retention, completion rates, and career success.

Tonjua Williams

President,
St. Petersburg College, Florida



Our approach to student success at the Michigan Community College Association begins by analyzing data on student outcomes. The hallmark contribution from the Community College Research Center to our student success work has been the release of several detailed and informative data dashboards focused on dual enrollment, transfer, and college completion. The Center for Student Success at the MCCA uses these data dashboards regularly to analyze statewide trends, identify exemplary colleges, and benchmark outcomes with peer states.

Erica Lee Orians

Vice President,
Michigan Community College Association



At Laramie County Community College, the impact of the CCRC's work has been profound, leading to a comprehensive redesign of the institution and the student experience. Utilizing CCRC's guided pathways research, as well as tapping into their generous outreach and support, we have seen significant improvements in student engagement, enrollment, retention, and overall achievement. CCRC is helping us set a new standard for community college outcomes and the overall student experience.

Joe Schaffer

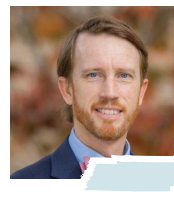
President
Laramie County Community College, Wyoming



Prior to the Community College Research Center, community college leaders attempted, unsuccessfully, to use university data to make decisions about their colleges. Community college leaders can now use national and state data to inform decisions to support student success and close opportunity and equity gaps. Based upon CCRC's extensive research and the guided pathways model, our college has completely transformed all processes and practices from the start of when a student is considering attending until they have completed their degree to transfer to a university or obtain employment.

Michelle Andreas

Vice President for Instruction,
South Puget Sound Community College, Washington



CCRC has been an invaluable thought and action partner for TBR for many years now. Given that they are one of the most trusted policy organizations in the field, we often look to CCRC for guidance, insight, and project partnership. Our partnership with CCRC has helped TBR better understand student success patterns, impacted our thinking about how to best serve students in an open access system, and broadened our thinking about student access and success innovations.

Russ Deaton

Executive Vice Chancellor for Policy & Strategy,
Tennessee Board of Regents – The College System
of Tennessee

30 Years of CCRC History

[Our full timeline >](#)

1996

Tom Bailey founds CCRC at Teachers College, Columbia University

2004

CCRC supports Lumina Foundation and other national organizations in launching Achieving the Dream, an initiative to build a “culture of evidence” in community colleges

2006

CCRC, MDRC, and University of Virginia launch the National Center for Postsecondary Research to study interventions to increase college readiness

2011

CCRC and partners establish CAPSEE to study labor market returns to credentials in five states

2014

CCRC and MDRC begin CAPR studies on developmental education reform

2022

CCRC and partners launch the ARCC Network to support community colleges’ recovery from the COVID pandemic

2025

More Essential Than Ever is published, highlighting the next frontiers of guided pathways reforms

Snapshots from CCRC Research

Partnering With Colleges and States Across the Nation

CCRC's research is as much about learning from colleges as it is about communicating findings in research reports. We partner with institutions to learn about the pressing challenges facing college leaders and faculty and the creative solutions taking shape in classrooms and on campus. Then we explore and test those solutions in qualitative and quantitative studies. Our research takes us across the country, from [Arkansas colleges](#) using multiple measures assessment to place students in math and English courses, to [Texas colleges](#) expanding the reach and impact of dual enrollment programs for high school students. In [Ohio](#), we're working with colleges to improve student support in introductory science courses to give students a strong start in STEM disciplines. In [Louisiana](#), we're investigating how colleges are improving supports in corequisite developmental courses. We're also working with colleges in [Florida](#), [Oklahoma](#), [Oregon](#), [North Carolina](#), and elsewhere to improve students' management of their own learning in online courses.



CCRC's New Areas of Study

CCRC's core mission is to provide the research that community colleges need to graduate more students and help them reach their goals. But, 30 years after our earliest days looking at workforce training in community colleges, our work is leading us down new paths as colleges experiment with innovative ways to help their students. In the last few years CCRC researchers have begun studying how community colleges can work with local organizations and industries to [train workers for the green economy](#). By expanding the skills learned in existing programs and creating new ones, colleges can make their students competitive in fields like electric vehicle repair, wind and solar technology installation, and cybersecurity. Other researchers are examining how community colleges can contribute to a [stronger childcare workforce](#) by making it easier to transfer and earn bachelor's degrees in early childhood education, exploring [first generation students'](#) support networks so colleges can better understand their needs and decisions around college, and investigating improvements to programs for [English language learners](#) in community colleges. As students and colleges evolve, so does CCRC's work.



The Evolution of CCRC's Major Areas of Work

Developmental education and guided pathways have been cornerstones of CCRC research for more than a decade. Through the [Center for the Analysis of Postsecondary Readiness \(CAPR\)](#) and other projects, CCRC has produced strong evidence on effective assessment and placement strategies and course designs. And the guided pathways research team has tracked the reforms at dozens of colleges while refining their ideas of what it takes to implement changes at scale. Both areas of work hit major milestones in 2025: CCRC released a new book, [More Essential Than Ever: Community College Pathways to Educational and Career Success](#), that builds on evaluation lessons and describes the next frontiers for guided pathways reforms. CAPR is wrapping up more than 10 years of work after starting as a federally funded research and development center led by CCRC and MDRC.



Research on the Value of Credentials and Success After College

CCRC projects help community colleges put students on pathways to living-wage jobs, work with local industries and workforce groups to align programs, and improve transfer rates from two-year to four-year institutions to ensure that students can realize the value of their degrees. The [Unlocking Opportunity Network](#), a joint research project between the Aspen Institute College Excellence Program and CCRC, aims to increase the number of community college students who complete programs that lead directly to high-value jobs or efficient transfer. CCRC also partners with the Virginia Community College System to improve a scholarship program, [Get a Skill, Get a Job, Get Ahead \(G3\)](#), that targets low-income students in high-demand workforce programs. We are researching how students [choose programs of study](#), and, through the [CUNY Policy Lab](#), developing better measures for understanding the immediate post-college transition along with interventions intended to improve the transition.



CCRC as a Training Ground

At CCRC, we equip early-career researchers with the skills and knowledge they need to conduct high-quality applied research; we also impart an appreciation of the value of community colleges that will inform the rest of their careers. Each summer, we welcome [undergraduate interns](#) who work closely with our experts to gain real-world experience in qualitative and quantitative research, as well as exposure to pressing issues in policy. We also hire graduate students from Teachers College who provide fresh insights and offer support as research assistants. The [Postsecondary Education Applied Research \(PEAR\) Fellowship](#) prepares doctoral students for research careers. Fellows emerge from the program ready to partner with policymakers and practitioners to conduct original, high-impact studies to diagnose problems and inform change. Through these opportunities, we strive to help young researchers develop the skills they need to become future leaders in the field of higher education research and practice.



CCRC Quick Stats | 2024-25

25

publications

136+

presentations

60+

media interviews

42

blog posts

26.5K

publication downloads



31,500

Monthly page views



6,300

Newsletter subscribers



19,500

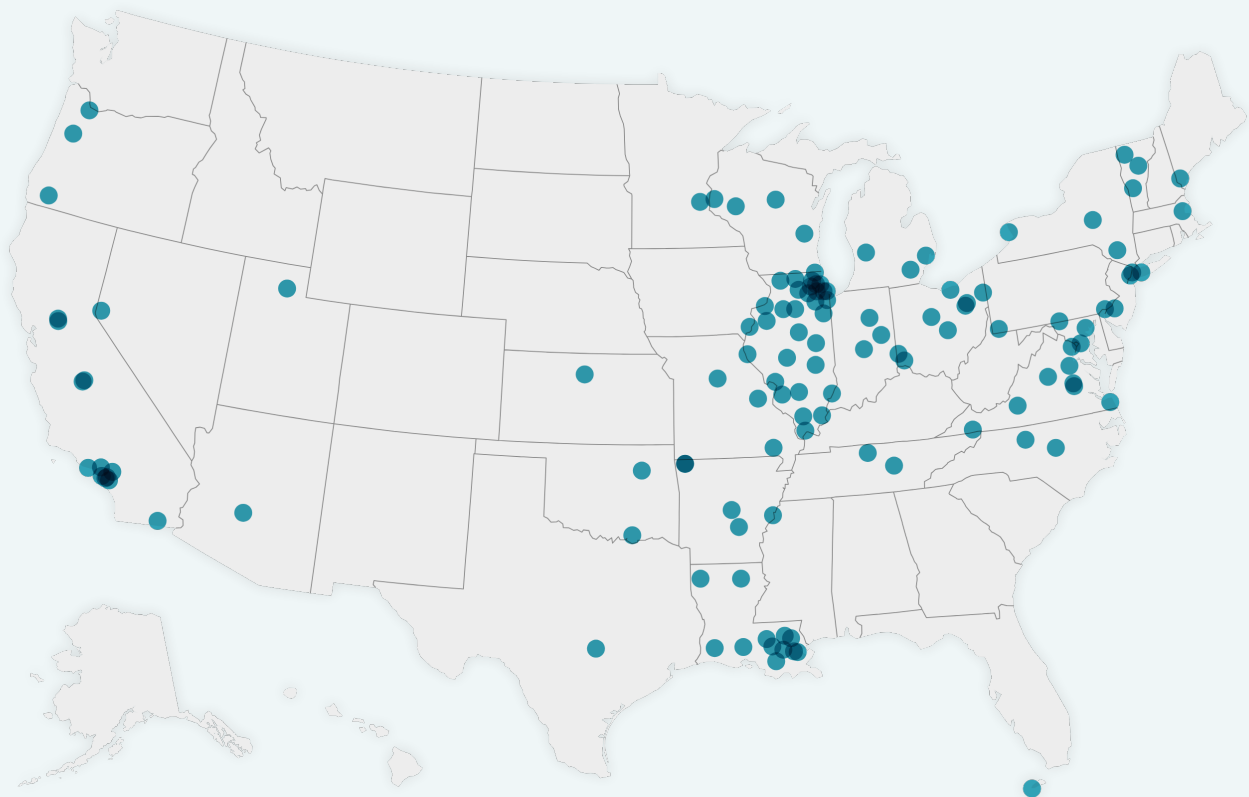
LinkedIn followers



6,000

Monthly blog views

Colleges Where CCRC Is Doing Research



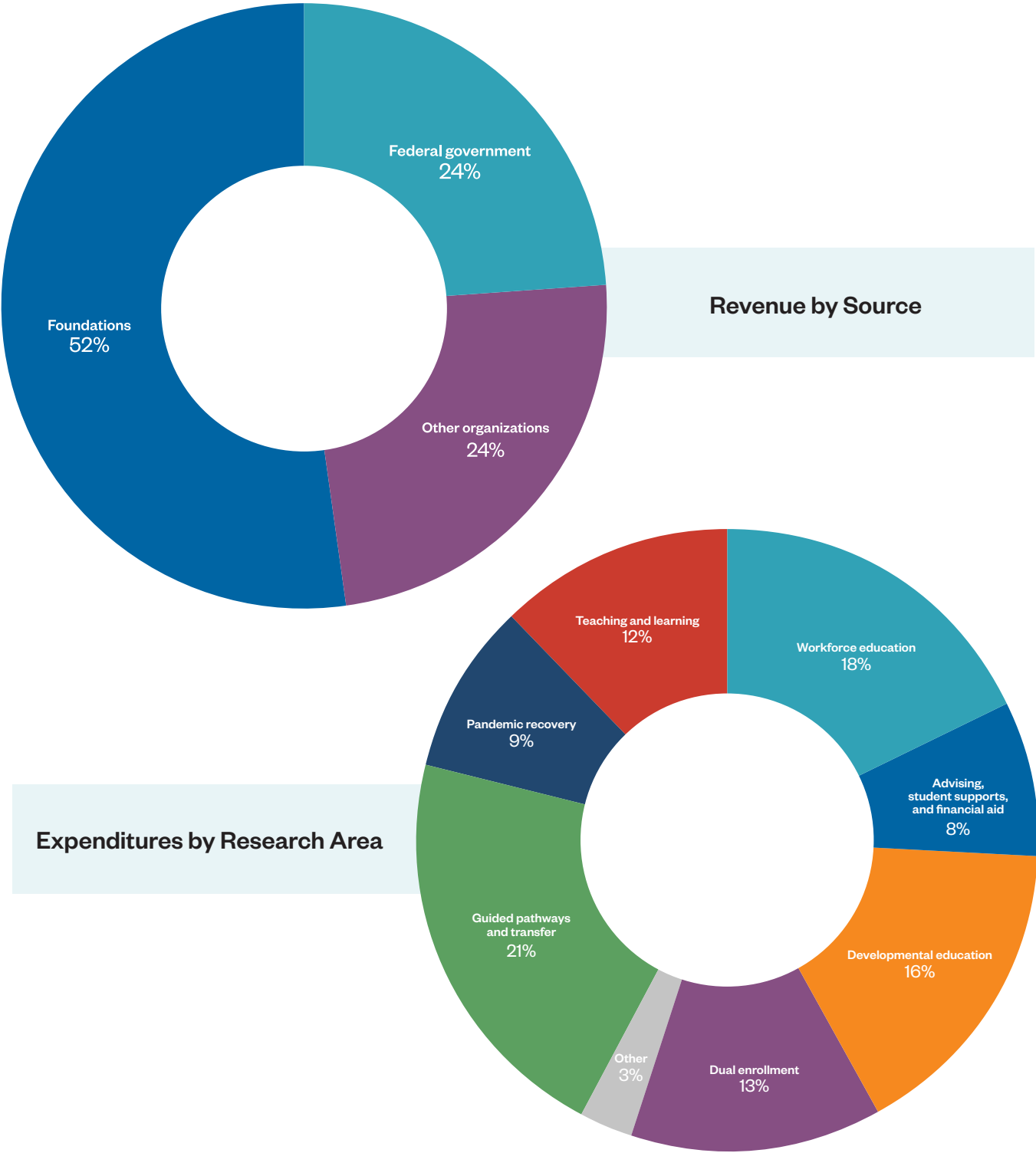
Financial Snapshot | Fiscal Year 2024-25

\$42 MILLION

Cumulative total of active grants

\$10.5 MILLION

Annual budget



CCRC Funders

Achieving the Dream
Alfred P. Sloan Foundation
Arnold Ventures
Ascendium Education Group
The Aspen Institute
Belk Foundation
Complete College America
ECMC Foundation
Gates Foundation
JPMorgan Chase Foundation
The Kresge Foundation
Laura and John Arnold Foundation
Lumina Foundation
Mathematica
MDRC

National Center for Inquiry & Improvement
National Renewable Energy Laboratory
Ohio Department of Higher Education
Schmidt Futures
Schreiber Philanthropy
SRI International
Steans Family Foundation
Strada Education Network
University of Pennsylvania
University of Texas at Austin
U.S. Department of Education,
Institute of Education Sciences
U.S. Department of Labor
WestEd
Windward Fund
Anonymous

*CCRC's 2024-2026 Biennial Report was written by Elizabeth Ganga and Shayleah Jenkins and designed by Juliette Isaacs.
Photos courtesy of Lee College and Carol McDonald of Palm Beach State College.*

[Online report >](#)

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RESEARCH CENTER
Teachers College, Columbia University

525 West 120th Street, Box 174
New York, New York 10027
212.678.3091
ccrc@columbia.edu
[@CommunityCCRC](#)
ccrc.tc.columbia.edu