

Higher Education:

Investing in Arkansas's Future Workforce



winthrop
rockefeller
foundation

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WRF Leadership in Higher Education

The Winthrop Rockefeller Foundation (WRF) believes the strength of Arkansas's higher education system directly correlates with the opportunity to expand prosperity for all Arkansans. Residents in our state fall behind nationally on a number of key measures:

- 46th in the nation for associate degree achievement
- 49th in the nation for achievement of a bachelor's degree or higher
- 4th in the nation for percentage of adults with incomes below the poverty line

Our state must develop a comprehensive career education strategy that closes the jobs-skills gap, provides equitable access to education and workforce, and prepares Arkansas graduates to compete in the 21st century. The economic health of the state will depend on how well opportunity meets the preparedness of its residents.



WRF applies this outcomes-based philosophy by investing in higher education to positively **impact** individuals and communities; **influence** programs, policy, and public discourse; and **leverage** public and private dollars. In support of higher education success and workforce development, the Foundation and its funder and grantee partners have:

- Invested early and consistently in nonprofits like the **Arkansas Single Parent Scholarship**, a statewide organization that has helped over 41,000 low-income single parents attain self-sufficiency through post-secondary education.
- Funded **nonpartisan research** on the jobs-skills gap in Arkansas with region-specific data on wages, job growth, and education - Expect More.
- Provided grants and technical assistance to implement best practices for higher education in Arkansas. Programs like **Achieving the Dream** and **Centers for Working Families** create more equitable access and outcomes for marginalized students.
- Provided organizational support for Arkansas Community Colleges, helping its Center for Student Success become a national model for implementing evidence-based practices in community colleges, and establishing Arkansas's Career Pathways Initiative as a **model for national welfare reform** that moves students out of poverty and into family-supporting careers.

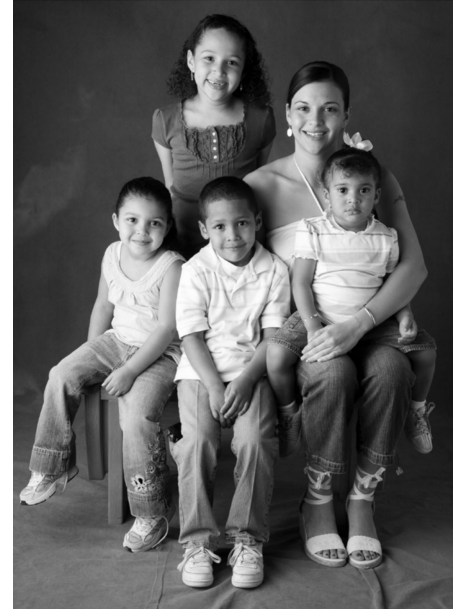
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WRF's Impact °

WRF's investments in higher education have had a positive impact on individuals, families, and communities in Arkansas. Select examples of WRF's **impact** are listed below:

- **Arkansas Single Parent Scholarship Fund (ASPSF).** ASPSF has awarded over 41,000 scholarships worth \$24 million since its establishment 26 years ago. From 1995 to the present, WRF has provided 10 grants totalling \$994,007. The organization supports low-income, single parents in Arkansas attending college, resulting in increased college retention and an 89 percent graduation rate among its parents.
- **Marginalized Males Workforce and Education Consortium (MMWEC).** With WRF support, in 2010 MMWEC gathered a community of leaders working to improve retention and graduation rates for African American, Latino, and low-income white males of all ages. Arkansas Baptist College, City Youth Ministries, P.A.R.K., Philander Smith College, Pulaski Technical College, Lyon College, the STAND Foundation and the University of Arkansas at Little Rock participate in the consortium.
- **Pulaski Technical College Culinary 3D Program.** Since 2015, WRF awarded two grants totalling \$70,000 to Pulaski Technical College to complete the accreditation process for its **Culinary 3D program**. This program trains and certifies individuals with developmental disabilities through structured experiential learning, offering pathways to gainful employment.
- **Lyon College.** In 2015, WRF made a \$125,000 grant to Lyon College to support enhanced academic, leadership, professional, and social development programming for low-income males, and to build a framework for a state-level "best practices" learning community specific to marginalized males and higher education.
- **Delivering on the Dream:** WRF awarded \$250,000 to develop support for immigrants in Arkansas to especially capitalize on workforce and education opportunities of **Deferred Action for Children Arrivals (DACA)**. Successful applications in Arkansas for DACA nearly doubled, from 4,500 to 8,200 in the first year. A partnership with the national **Delivering on the Dream (DOTD)** initiative gave additional workforce benefits to 7 nonprofits. These nonprofits served nearly 40,000 individuals and assisted over 1,400 with legal challenges.



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WRF's Influence

Throughout its history, the Foundation has positively influenced public discourse, programmatic best practices, and policy making related to higher education. Select examples of WRF's influence are listed below:

- **Accelerate Arkansas.** WRF's 1999 **"I HIGATE"** #1 study led to the public-private partnership of Accelerate Arkansas and advocacy for policies that promote sustainability and entrepreneurship. Grants totaling \$565,510 were used to coordinate conferences, economic forums, legislator education, and partnerships to ultimately expand the state's knowledge economy.
- **Saving for the Future.** Beginning in 2012, WRF provided grants for research and development to help more Arkansans grow long-term assets for education - Individual Development Accounts and Children's Savings Accounts (CSAs). A current partnership with the University of Arkansas is testing and designing CSAs and other tools that will build savings, increase enrollment and program completion rates, and reduce student debt for Latino and Marshallese students in Northwest Arkansas.
- **Successful Strategies.** In 2012, WRF published **6B NQ6I LEGATEZ IE: HMV-O: NCH**. The report assessed key factors for earning a higher education and uncovered a set of effective strategies for increasing college retention and graduation rates. The research indicated that hands-on advising, engaging instructors, data-driven decision making, and one-to-one student connections effectively retain Arkansas students. The findings continue to influence WRF investments in higher education initiatives.
- **A Vision for Arkansas.** Based on WRF's 2015 report, **6BL>TB>I; NZL>**, we launched **\$R>N, IL>**. Using regional, statewide, and industrial data on careers and education, *Expect More* provides a vision of improved skills and jobs in an Arkansas where more people earn family-supporting wages. The initiative convenes leaders across the state to identify barriers and propose solutions.
- **Small Investment, Big Return.** In 2016, WRF commissioned the Migration Policy Institute (MPI) to investigate the costs and benefits of undocumented students in Arkansas paying in-state tuition. MPI researchers found that allowing undocumented students to take advantage of in-state tuition can be beneficial. The resulting increase in overall college enrollment and completion by undocumented students would substantially boost their individual incomes and create a positive net revenue for the state through increased lifetime tax payments. The report will be publicly released in 2017.



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WRF's Leverage

WRF has leveraged additional public and private investments beyond its own resources to move the needle on higher education outcomes for Arkansas students. Select examples of WRF's **leverage** are listed below:

- **Achieving the Dream (ATD).** In 2008, WRF supported **Achieving the Dream**, a national initiative launched by the Lumina Foundation. ATD strengthens and builds community college capacities to ensure that more students complete their college education and have more opportunity for economic success. In its first year, WRF awarded \$400,000 to four Arkansas community colleges: Phillips Community College (PCC), National Park College (NPC), College of the Ouachitas (CO), and Pulaski Technical College (PTC). The four community colleges applied the ATD model to develop and implement interventions to improve student success. Through ATD, participating institutions **significantly enhanced student outcomes** and established student success as a priority across the state's network of 22 community colleges.



- **Center for Working Families.** In 2009, WRF awarded grants, together totalling \$175,000, to three Arkansas community colleges: CO, PTC, and Southeast Arkansas College. The grants provided funding to hire Center for Working Families (CWF) staff at each campus and strategically integrate existing services available on each campus. The CWF model leveraged funding and technical resources from the Annie E. Casey Foundation. The model coordinated job training to help students increase their income and earning potential and reduce the cost of financial transactions.
- **Complete College America (CCA).** In 2010, WRF provided \$15,000 to the National Center for Higher Education Management (NCHEMS) to fund research that develops education data and policy baseline for CCA in Arkansas. Established in 2009, CCA is a national nonprofit with a single mission: to work with states to significantly increase the number of Americans with quality career certificates or college degrees and to close attainment gaps for traditionally underrepresented populations. NCHEMS used CCA's aggregated data to conduct a comprehensive analysis of Arkansas's higher education policies and their contribution and detraction from increasing overall educational attainment.

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- **Arkansas Teacher Corps (ATC).** WRF is a founding funder of ATC and has provided \$484,000 in support since 2012. ATC developed an alternative teacher certification model that serves Arkansas's most challenging to staff districts and schools. ATC currently manages 75 Teaching Fellows in more than 20 districts (2017-18). The organization also leveraged \$2.3 million in additional funding from the Walton Family Foundation, Windgate Charitable Trust, the Arkansas Department of Education, and the University of Arkansas Women's Giving Circle.
- **College Count\$.** Since 2010, WRF grants to Arkansas Community Colleges (ACC) totalling \$555,000 has leveraged additional grants from other funders, improved infrastructure, supported Arkansas community colleges, and produced **longitudinal data** on the Arkansas Career Pathways Initiative (CPI). The *College Count\$* report and its findings on CPI gained **national recognition** and recommendations have been made to make changes to federal policy based on Arkansas's program. Other states are modeling programs after ACC's Center for Student Success. *College Count\$* and other initiatives at ACC have used WRF grants to leverage almost \$20 million in federal and private grants to support programs, member colleges, and improved student outcomes.

Where Do We Go From Here?

As we near the end of Moving the Needle (MTN) 2.0, the WRF Board and staff will reflect on outcomes - analyze and interpret lessons learned, and plan for the future through a 3-year **Reflection, Analysis, and Planning (RAP)** process. RAP will culminate with the adoption of the Foundation's next strategic plan.

During the RAP process, we will dig deep into the role that Program-Related Investments played in achieving the MTN vision and goals. As we evaluate the impact of our PRIs, we will answer the following questions:

- How has investment in higher education supported the change we seek through Moving the Needle, and where has it fallen short?
- What is the scope of our state, regional, and national network for change in higher education?
- Are we making progress as quickly as possible, and does quickly mean effectively?

WRF has valued the importance of higher education as a lever for comprehensive change. These values and our legacy guide us through each phase of RAP. In this case, our history of supporting higher education offers a continuum of data to reflect, analysis, and ultimately finalize our next strategic plan.

