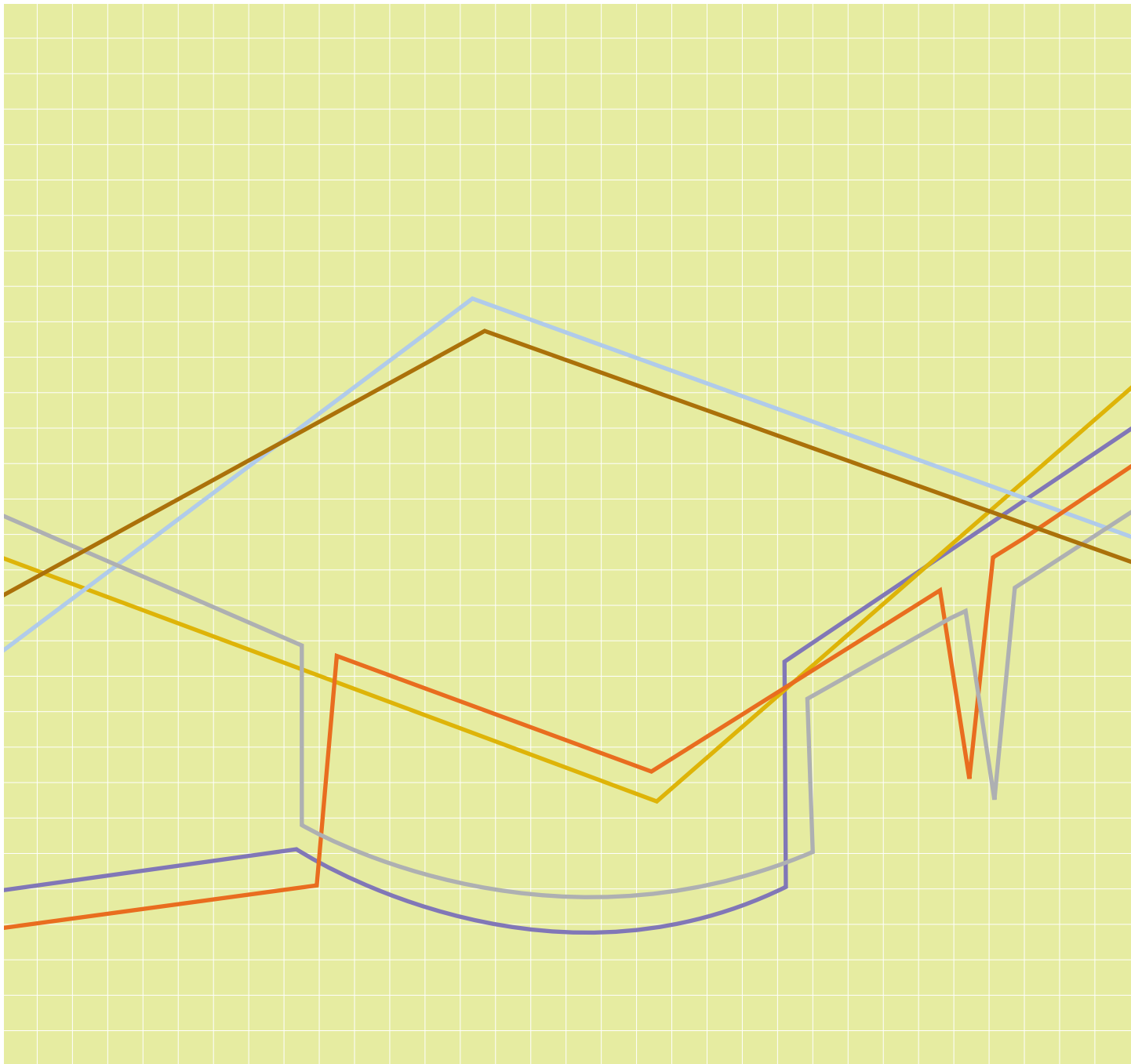


# Corporate Investments In College Readiness And Access

PREPARED BY THE INSTITUTE FOR HIGHER EDUCATION POLICY  
FOR THE BUSINESS-HIGHER EDUCATION FORUM WITH SUPPORT FROM USA FUNDS  
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# Corporate Investments In College Readiness And Access

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# Executive Summary

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International competitiveness, while always an important concept for American business, has become a critical issue in recent years. As both the world standing and the capabilities of the United States visibly decline, it becomes impossible not to take note of the barriers to college access that have plagued disadvantaged populations in the American educational system for so long. With the growing need for postsecondary education in almost every occupation, these barriers prevent an important segment of the U.S. population from adequately preparing for life and work in a 21st-century economy. As a result, leaders in all arenas who have long been interested in educational issues are now refocusing their attention on college readiness and access. In particular, many business leaders have sharpened their interest in the education and training of the future workforce, recognizing the growing need for individuals with college degrees. With the combination of the business community's financial resources and business leaders' public prominence, strategically targeted philanthropy initiatives have a chance to make an important impact on educational practice and outcomes.

College readiness and access initiatives, defined as efforts intended to increase the likelihood that students will graduate from high school fully prepared

to enroll and succeed in college, could benefit from this type of strategic resource targeting. Specific aspects of college readiness and access addressed by such initiatives include assisting students in undertaking the complex college admissions process and finding the financial resources to pay for college. Most important, college readiness and access programs work to ensure that students are academically prepared for college-level courses. Effective college readiness and access initiatives address these concerns by engaging in early and sustained intervention; connecting students with an adult who is caring, knowledgeable, and responsible for tracking student success; linking programmatic work to broader educational goals; and supporting students after they enter college to ensure their continued success.

This study sets out to understand the extent of corporate support for college readiness and access and the most effective practices major corporations use to support college readiness and access initiatives. A review of college readiness and access support by Fortune 100 corporations ascertained the following:

- Education is a key priority for corporate philanthropy in the United States—90 of the Fortune 100 companies clearly express support for education as one of their philanthropic goals, and 68 can be positively identified as supporting college readiness and access programs

- Almost two-thirds of these 68 companies support between one and three college readiness and access programs, although seven companies supported 10 or more such programs
  - Most of the 68 corporations support existing college readiness and access programs rather than developing their own. Only nine companies can be positively identified as supporting programs that they had founded, all but one of which were branded with the corporate name
  - Corporations tend to support college readiness and access programs located in their own geographic areas—52 of the 68 corporations support programs located near their corporate headquarters
  - Nineteen of the 68 corporations that contribute to college readiness and access initiatives also support education policy or advocacy work
3. Building ongoing and reciprocal partnerships with funded college readiness and access organizations, as well as with external content experts and organizations
  4. Convening stakeholders such as educators, policymakers, schools, nonprofits, parents, and students who can work together to identify community needs, shape college readiness and access programs in response, and ensure initiative sustainability once corporate support is no longer available

Interviews with selected corporate leaders and others involved in corporate-sponsored college readiness and access initiatives demonstrate that major corporations have developed strategies to address the need for increased readiness and access for postsecondary education. These strategies fall into four categories:

1. Investing in college readiness and access in order to develop a workforce aligned with corporate and industry needs and priorities
2. Using data-driven decision making

The strategies outlined above document a fundamental change in the way many corporations are approaching the issue of college readiness and access. For example, in the past they might have offered only financial support to major scholarship funds. Now they might accompany such donations with support for college readiness and access initiatives that work to ensure that students have the college knowledge and academic preparation necessary to enroll and succeed in college, as well as adequate financial resources. This approach to corporate philanthropy has the potential to promote long-term change, not only for the students directly helped by these programs, but for all American students for whom access to postsecondary education may be a crucial factor in building a successful future.

# Introduction

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**“The world economy.” “The internationalization of business.” “Globalization.” “International competitiveness.” There is no shortage of buzzwords to keep the U.S. population thinking about the connection between our world standing and the barriers to college access that have plagued disadvantaged populations in the American educational system for so long. The imperative to remain internationally competitive has highlighted the importance of higher education and the significant challenges facing American students who seek access to postsecondary education. According to the U.S. Department of Labor (2007), the number of occupations requiring at least an associate’s degree will increase 16 percent by 2016, and an associate’s degree or higher is the standard level of education needed for 19 of the 30 fastest-growing occupations. In addition, the largest growth in the nation’s labor force over the next decade is expected to be among members of racial and ethnic minority groups.**

However, barriers to college access for disadvantaged populations, including students from low-income families as well as racial and ethnic minorities, remain a persistent challenge for the American educational system. Among students who graduated from high school in 2005, nearly three-fourths of White students immediately enrolled in college, compared with only a little more than half of Black and Hispanic students. Similarly, 81 percent of those in the highest income quintile immediately enrolled in college, versus 54 percent of those in the lowest income quintile (U.S. Department of Education 2007). In light of the growing need for postsecondary education in many occupations, these numbers suggest that an important segment of the U.S. population may not be adequately prepared for life and work in a 21st-century economy.

As the challenges facing American competitiveness have become more apparent, leaders in all arenas who have long been interested in educational issues are now refocusing their attention on the need for increased college readiness and access. Although education leaders—including those in K–12 education, higher education, various

levels of government, and education-focused nonprofit organizations—have customarily been charged with solving educational issues, there is a growing awareness that everyone will be affected by the problems facing American education. In particular, business has sharpened its interest in the education and training of its future workforce, recognizing the growing need for individuals with college degrees.

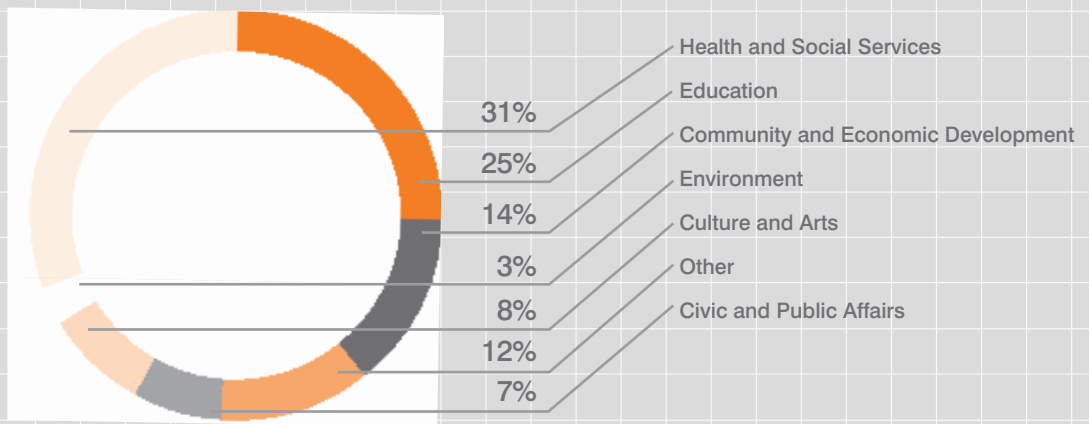
Over the past century, corporate philanthropy has demonstrated significant support for our nation’s public education system: creating new schools, underwriting research, funding scholarships, generating new curricula, setting agendas, bolstering training, and building the case for policy changes (Colvin 2005). Businesses have made financial and in-kind contributions to public education and have engaged in state, district, and school-based partnerships. While it is widely noted that philanthropic donations are small in comparison to the public funds spent on education, donations from private philanthropy sources to educational initiatives total approximately \$2 billion annually (Greene 2005). Furthermore, corporate investment in education represents the

FIGURE

# 1

## Corporate Giving by Program Area, 2006

Note: Based on a sample of U.S. corporate giving.  
Source: Coady 2007



second largest area of corporate philanthropy (FIGURE 1). Because of their prominence in local, regional, and national arenas, business leaders also have the opportunity to influence educational policy and programs. The combination of financial resources and public prominence ensures that strategically targeted initiatives from the business community can have an important impact on educational practice and outcomes.

College readiness and access initiatives, defined as efforts to increase the likelihood that students will graduate from high school fully prepared to enroll and succeed in college, may benefit from this type of strategic targeting of resources by corporations. Aspects of college readiness and access addressed by such initiatives include assisting students in undertaking the complex college admissions process and, in some cases, offering scholarships or other forms of support to students once they have enrolled in college. Most important, college readiness and access programs work to ensure that students are academically prepared for college-level courses—a level of academic preparation also closely associated with workforce readiness.

This study seeks to develop a framework through which to understand the most effective practices corporations use to support college readiness and access. The study begins with a discussion of key aspects of college readiness and access and the essential components of effective college readiness and access initiatives. Then, to convey a sense of the breadth and depth of corporate support for college readiness and access programs, the study examines education philanthropy by Fortune 100 companies. The study also uses information gleaned from interviews and case studies with select corporate leaders to highlight aspects of corporate college readiness and access initiatives and the strategies corporations use in deciding to fund them. The study probes the experiences of corporations that have directed extensive support to college readiness and access programs, with the goal of illuminating how these corporations think about, plan, and implement their investments in college readiness and access.

# Understanding College Readiness and Access

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Preparation for and access to college involve a complex set of factors that, when combined, make higher education attainment elusive for too many of the nation's most vulnerable residents. College readiness can be simply defined as “the level of preparation a student needs in order to enroll and succeed—without remediation—in a credit-bearing general education course at a postsecondary institution” (Conley 2007). In practice, however, preparing for college is a complex and lengthy process, requiring that students and families:

1. Have an understanding of the intricacies of college admissions and financial aid, also known as “college knowledge”
2. Have the means to pay for a college education
3. Ensure that the student receives the academic preparation necessary to undertake and succeed in college-level course work (FIGURE 2)

Moreover, the resources needed for college readiness and access are not evenly distributed across the population, with low-income students, minority students, and students whose parents did not attend college less likely to graduate from high school fully prepared for college or work.

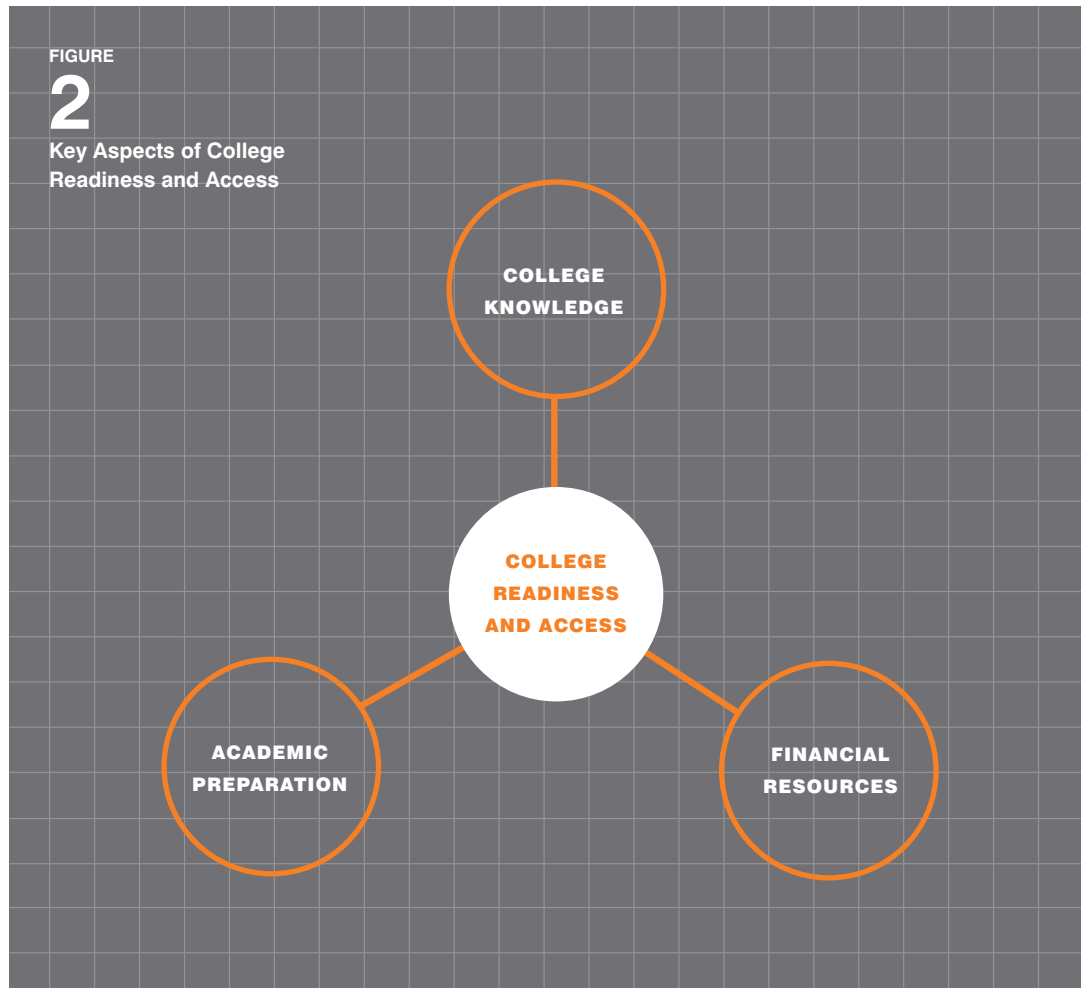
To enroll and succeed in college, students must be equipped with the tools for postsecondary success, including high educational aspirations, strong peer and family support systems, and essential knowledge of the college-going process. On a positive note, research suggests that most American young people perceive higher education as important and hope to earn a college degree (Ad Council 2006; Johnson and Duffett 2005). However, Black, Hispanic, and low-income young people, as well as those whose parents did not attend college, are considerably less likely than their peers to enroll in college or complete a postsecondary credential (Carnevale and Fry 2000; Ruppert 2003; U.S. Department of Education 2007). One reason for this disparity is that these students are more likely to lack access to the necessary college knowledge and support systems, whether from their families or from high school counselors (McDonough 2004; Tierney, Colyar, and Corwin 2003; Venezia, Kirst, and Antonio 2003).

Financial barriers can also be a particular obstacle for underrepresented students, for whom the prospect of paying for a college education can be daunting. Costs associated with higher education have skyrocketed in recent years and place a disproportionate burden on low-income families (Callan 2006). Moreover, many students and parents, particularly those with little college experience, tend to overestimate the cost of higher education, leading them to assume that it is beyond their financial reach (Horn, Chen, and Chapman 2003; Venezia, Kirst, and Antonio 2003). Low-income students and those whose parents did not attend college may also have less access to information about the availability of financial aid (Harris Interactive 2003; McDonough 2004). Finally, the complex financial aid application process keeps many qualified students from applying for much-needed financial assistance (Advisory Committee on Student Financial Assistance 2005; King 2004).

FIGURE

# 2

## Key Aspects of College Readiness and Access



Readiness for postsecondary study begins, above all, with mastering academic skills. Taking a rigorous academic curriculum in high school is one of the strongest indicators of eventual college enrollment (Adelman 2006). Although there are varying perspectives on how to define college readiness, one study found that the majority of 2002 high school graduates had not completed course work at the minimum level required for college admission. Moreover, academic readiness varied by race and ethnicity, with 40 percent of White students versus 23 percent of Black students and only 20 percent of Hispanic students considered college ready (Greene and Winters 2005). Another measure of college readiness is baseline knowledge in key academic areas. When using this standard, researchers concluded that, as of 2004, only 22 percent of high school graduates who took the ACT test had a level of knowledge that would allow them to succeed in first-year college classes in English, math, and science. Moreover, Black, Hispanic, and American Indian students were substantially less likely than the overall student

population to meet these benchmarks (ACT, Inc. 2006). These numbers support the idea that a substantial number of students need additional academic preparation if they are to succeed in college or the workforce.

### COMPONENTS OF EFFECTIVE COLLEGE READINESS AND ACCESS INITIATIVES

College readiness and access initiatives target at-risk students at the K–12 level in an attempt to help them overcome academic preparation barriers, as well as to increase their level of college knowledge and help them identify financial resources available to help pay for college. These programs may be offered in or out of school and are often initiated through partnerships among nonprofit organizations, higher education institutions, government agencies, community-based organizations, and/or K–12 schools (Gándara and Bial 2001). In addition to programs that provide direct services to students, college readiness and access initiatives may include curriculum reform and teacher quality enhancement efforts

designed to improve students' readiness for college and/or work after high school graduation. Evaluations of college readiness and access initiatives have yielded a set of common practices generally associated with successful student outcomes. These practices cover all three aspects of college readiness and access discussed above—college knowledge, financial resources, and academic preparation—and the most effective initiatives integrate multiple program components, for instance, coupling academic enrichment with information on financial aid and college admissions (Cunningham, Merisotis, and Redmond 2003).

One of the most important practices for effective college readiness and access programs is early and sustained intervention for students (Gándara and Bial 2001). Research has found that most college readiness and access programs begin in the 11th grade and offer only short-term interventions that last until high school graduation (Tierney and Hagedorn 2002). Educators, however, increasingly point to middle school as a critical juncture where college readiness and access programs should be targeted (Camblin 2003; Wimberly and Noeth 2005).

Successful college readiness and access programs connect students with an adult who is caring, knowledgeable, and responsible for tracking student success (Gándara and Bial 2001; Martinez and Klopott 2005; Tierney and Hagedorn 2002). Many such programs include a mentoring component, linking students with members of the higher education community (such as college students

or faculty) or with community members or business leaders. These relationships are seen as important ways to empower students and help them build positive self-esteem, as well as to tap into human resources in the local community (Tierney, Colyar, and Corwin 2003). Successful programs also foster family involvement in college readiness and access activities (Gándara and Bial 2001; Oesterreich 2000; Tierney and Hagedorn 2002). Such involvement can help parents to become advocates for their children, as well as to impress on them the importance of postsecondary aspirations and financial planning (Tierney, Colyar, and Corwin 2003).

Effective college readiness and access initiatives link their programmatic work to broader educational goals. Such programs must work closely with the local school system in order to stay connected to the academic goals of the school or school district (Camblin 2003). Supplemental academic instruction may not be enough to help students become college ready. Some advocates argue that the most effective approach to academic enrichment is to offer college-level work through Advanced Placement, International Baccalaureate, dual enrollment, and/or early college high school programs (Bailey and Karp 2003; Kim 2006; Lerner and Brand 2006). Others suggest that aligning state high school graduation requirements with college admissions requirements and paying close attention to assessments of student learning are the best ways to ensure that all students graduate from high school prepared for college or work (ACT, Inc. 2006; American Diploma Project Network 2006; Venezia, Kirst, and Antonio 2003).

**ACADEMIC READINESS  
VARIED BY RACE AND  
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**40**

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**23**

**PERCENT OF BLACK  
STUDENTS AND ONLY**

**20**

**PERCENT OF HISPANIC  
STUDENTS CONSIDERED  
COLLEGE READY.**

A final key component of effective college readiness and access initiatives is support for students after they enter college (Tierney and Hagedorn 2002). This support may be financial, in the form of scholarships or other aid, or it may involve summer bridge programs to help students acclimate to college life and course work and/or ongoing opportunities for academic help, mentoring, or personal and social enrichment after college enrollment. Scholarships, in particular, provide both an incentive for students to enroll in college and financial support once enrolled—a key feature for low-income students who otherwise may not be able to attend college. However, many programs are unable to offer significant scholarship assistance due to financial constraints (Gándara and Bial 2001).

The practices described above are often found combined in effective college readiness and access programs. Together with sufficient funding and careful attention to program evaluation to ensure that student participants are achieving desired outcomes, these practices can go far in helping students prepare for and gain access to a college education (Gándara and Bial 2001; Tierney and Hagedorn 2002). Supporting programs that use these key practices and demonstrate positive student outcomes is one way corporations can make effective investments in college readiness and access.

# Fortune 100 Corporations and Support for College Readiness and Access

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To better understand corporate investment in college readiness and access, this study undertook an assessment of the breadth and depth of corporate support for college readiness and access initiatives. Because of the enormous range of corporations in the United States, the 2007 Forbes Fortune 100 list was used to select the corporations to be considered, recognizing that the rest of the business community may emulate these practices on a smaller scale. This process identified a number of Fortune 100 corporations that make college readiness and access—and education more generally—a philanthropic priority, as indicated on their organizations' Web sites or in their mission statements, as well as many others that may not make college readiness and access a priority but still support programs in this area.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> To gather this information, we relied on two primary sources of data: (1) publicly available information found on each company's Web site, or in annual reports or other materials accessible on the company's Web site or an associated corporate foundation Web site; and (2) publicly available information found on the Web sites or in the annual reports of college readiness programs listed in the online National College Access Program Directory developed by the National College Access Network and the Pathways to College Network (2007).

<sup>2</sup> In a number of cases, we were unable to determine if the corporation engaged in education philanthropy and/or supported college readiness and access programs. In addition, because the National College Access Program Directory is not comprehensive and the information available on corporate Web sites changes often, it is entirely possible that additional Fortune 100 corporations also support college readiness and access programs but were not identified through this screening process.

Education is a key priority for corporate philanthropy in the United States—90 of the Fortune 100 companies reviewed clearly expressed support for education as one of their philanthropic goals. Many of these companies also support college readiness and access as part of their education philanthropy (FIGURE 3). Thirty-three Fortune 100 corporations could be positively identified as contributors to college readiness and access initiatives from information available on their corporate or corporate foundation Web sites, suggesting that college readiness and access is a relatively high philanthropic priority for them. An additional 35 companies were identified as contributors to college readiness and access programs based on lists of supporters or partners found on college readiness and access program Web sites, although they did not post information about their support for these programs on their own corporate or corporate foundation Web sites.<sup>2</sup>

Together, these 68 Fortune 100 companies sponsor a range of programs that deliver services to students at the elementary, middle school, high school, and college levels. Some of these programs are aligned with broader education policy goals,

such as district- or school-level reform efforts. Often, corporations support programs that are closely aligned with their own business goals, especially building a better-educated potential workforce. This section reviews investments in college readiness and access by these 68 companies with a focus on three key areas: philanthropic mission and priorities; support for college readiness and access initiatives; and support for education policy and advocacy initiatives.

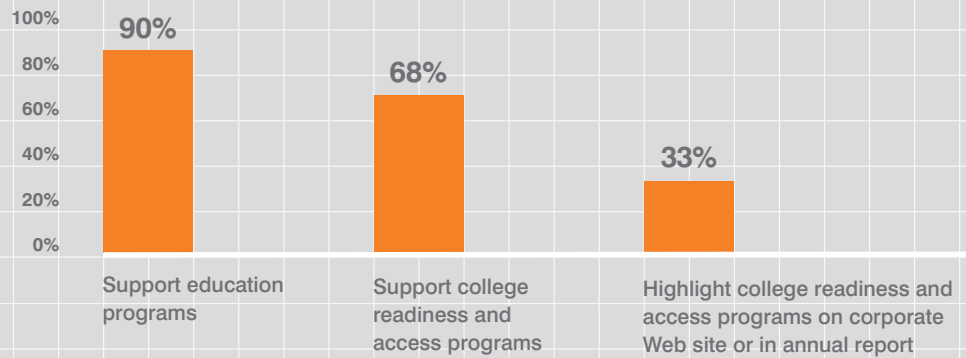
## PHILANTHROPIC MISSION AND PRIORITIES

There are numerous ways to gauge the level of corporate commitment to college readiness and access goals. For example, more than a quarter (18) of the 68 corporations that support college readiness and access initiatives have philanthropic mission or purpose statements that include education. These statements are usually broad in scope and may include education in conjunction with other goals such as enhancing quality of life or meeting community needs. Most of these statements, however, do not specify the exact nature of the corporation's support for education. Rather, they encompass

FIGURE

3

Support for Education or College Readiness and Access Programs Among Fortune 100 Corporations, 2007



Note: Percentages do not add to 100 percent because companies appear in multiple categories.

broad goals such as improving educational quality, raising academic standards, encouraging innovation, and increasing opportunity in education. In such cases, participation in college readiness and access initiatives was derived from publicly additional information available found on either the company's Web site or in annual reports.

While many of the companies discussed here did not mention education in their philanthropic mission statement, most of them did include education in the list of program areas they fund, indicating that education is, for many, a philanthropic priority, even if not an identified component of the mission statement. Fifty-five of the 68 companies listed education as a key funding area; 10 indicated that it was their top or, in some cases, sole funding priority. Twenty of the companies specifically indicated that they support programs to improve college readiness and access—often defining this support in terms of providing opportunities for young people to fully reach their educational potential—or had signature programs that meet this definition. In addition, 34 of the 68 companies indicated on their Web sites that they fund college scholarships outside of any college

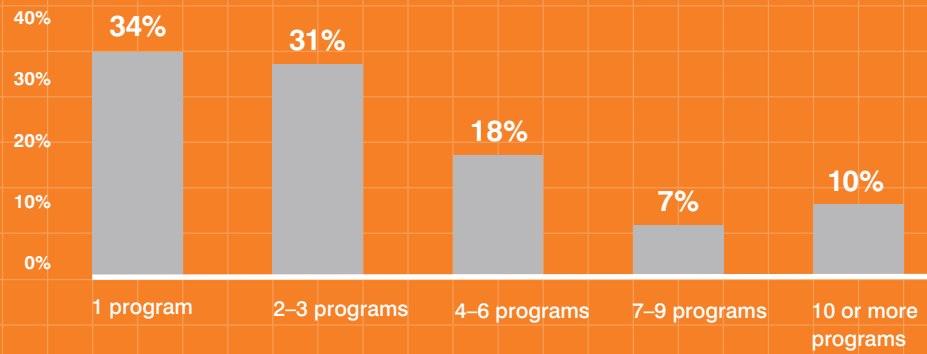
readiness and access programs they support, in many cases by donating to organizations such as the United Negro College Fund or the Hispanic Scholarship Fund.

For the most part, information about each corporation's support of college readiness and access programs, if it is on the corporate Web site at all, tends to be somewhat buried in the details of the company's philanthropic giving. In fact, 11 of the 33 companies that described college readiness and access programs on their corporate or corporate foundation Web sites did so only in a list of grantees or in a corporate philanthropy report. However, several companies highlighted their support for college readiness and access. The Goldman Sachs Foundation Web site, for example, prominently features the corporation's signature Developing High Potential Youth program, an effort that funds organizations to "find and nurture bright young people in harder-to-reach communities, providing them with the resources they need to stay on the path to high achievement and future leadership" (Goldman Sachs Foundation 2007). Similarly, General Electric (GE) features its Developing

FIGURE

4

Number of College Readiness and Access Programs Supported by Fortune 100 Corporations, 2007



Futures in Education program on the main GE Foundation page. GE is also one of a handful of Fortune 100 corporations to provide research on college readiness and access on its corporate or corporate foundation Web site (General Electric 2007).

The relative ease or difficulty of obtaining information about corporate support for college readiness and access programs offers some insight into the role college readiness and access play in a company’s overall philanthropic focus. In the case of GE, for example, the fact that the supported college readiness and access program carries the corporate brand is an obvious indicator of its significant role in the company’s giving strategy. Other corporations that mention college preparation and access as a key funding priority on subsections of the company’s philanthropy Web page may not have corporate-branded programs but clearly still consider college readiness and access an important part of overall giving.

Companies that do not clearly identify college readiness and access in their list of funding priorities—as well as those that do not mention such support on their corporate Web site despite having made gifts to college readiness and access programs—may not have a strategic philanthropic focus on college readiness and access. Alternatively, they may simply not be touting this focus to the public.

Among corporations that do place a strategic philanthropic emphasis on college readiness and access—or on education more generally—as indicated in their mission or purpose statements, several were very clear about this strategy on their Web sites. For example, the GE Foundation

Web site indicates that its strategy is to “define focused, research-based grant initiatives and partner with schools and organizations to develop high-impact efforts” (General Electric 2007). In the same vein, State Farm’s Web site indicates that, as a part of its Education Excellence initiative, the company has “moved away from what is described as ‘checkbook philanthropy’ to an accountability model that identifies goals, measures results and engages in collaborative efforts” (State Farm Insurance 2007). The strategies described by the GE Foundation and State Farm illustrate how certain Fortune 100 companies have taken a focused approach in their education philanthropy.

**SUPPORT FOR COLLEGE READINESS AND ACCESS INITIATIVES**

While many of the Fortune 100 corporations reviewed for this report supported college readiness and access initiatives, there was substantial variation in the content and depth of that support, as measured by programs and dollars spent. On average, each corporation supports fewer than four college readiness and access programs. However, that average is somewhat inflated by seven corporations that each supported more than 10 college readiness and access programs, including Bank of America, which supported at least 22 separate college readiness and access programs. Likewise, the Freddie Mac Foundation supported 12 college readiness and access programs in 2006, awarding some relatively large grants to some, including an \$85,000 award to the George Mason University Foundation for its Early Identification Program (Freddie Mac Foundation 2007). Most companies supported a much smaller number of college readiness and access programs—almost two-thirds of these companies supported between one and three programs (FIGURE 4).

Some companies also supported college readiness and access programs with large awards over multiple years. For instance, in 2006, the AT&T Foundation awarded an \$800,000 grant over eight years to the College for All Texans Foundation to develop mobile education resource centers to bring college information to students. In the same year, the foundation awarded the University of Wisconsin—Madison a \$250,000 grant for its Pre-College Enrichment Opportunity Program for Learning Excellence, a program that AT&T has supported since 1999, when it made an initial grant of \$600,000 (AT&T 2007).

Most of the 68 Fortune 100 corporations reviewed support existing college readiness and access programs, rather than developing their own. Only nine companies were identified as supporting programs that they had founded, all but one of which were branded with the corporate name (the exception is the Next Generation Venture Fund, of which Goldman Sachs is a founding partner). Corporate-branded programs were the 3M-Johnson-Harding Business/School Partnership; the Boeing-Bellevue International Math Standards Partnership; the Henry Ford Academy and the Henry Ford Learning Institute; GE Developing Futures in Education; the McKesson Summer Youth Development Program; the Merck Institute for Science Education; the Microsoft K12 Math Partnership in Puget Sound; and the Pfizer Education Initiative.

While few Fortune 100 companies have developed their own college readiness and access initiatives, they do tend to support programs located in the geographic areas they serve, with 52 companies supporting programs located near their corporate headquarters. In many cases, moreover, college

readiness and access programs were supported by multiple corporations—53 corporations supported programs that were also supported by at least one other Fortune 100 company. For example, the Harlem Educational Activities Fund (HEAF) has received a \$100,000 grant from Time Warner and has also received grants of \$10,000 or more from Bank of America, J.P. Morgan Chase, New York Life, and Met Life, all of which have their corporate headquarters in New York City (HEAF 2007). In addition, a number of major national college readiness and access programs—including AVID, Project GRAD, College for Every Student, Summer Search, and the Posse Foundation—are supported by multiple Fortune 100 corporations.

The college readiness and access programs supported by these corporations tend to be clearly focused on meeting workforce needs. For example, as Raytheon, a technology-driven defense contractor, explains on its corporate giving Web site, “For students with potential to be future engineers who need encouragement and support, Raytheon drives interactive, hands-on education support programs that coach, fund, and engage students in math and science” (Raytheon Company 2008). Similarly, the SECME program, which has as its goal increasing the number of underrepresented students completing college degrees in science, math, and engineering, is supported by companies such as DuPont, ExxonMobil, Hewlett Packard, John Deere, 3M, and Lockheed Martin, all of which rely on college-educated workers with credentials in these fields (SECME, Inc. 2007).

### **EDUCATION POLICY AND ADVOCACY INITIATIVES**

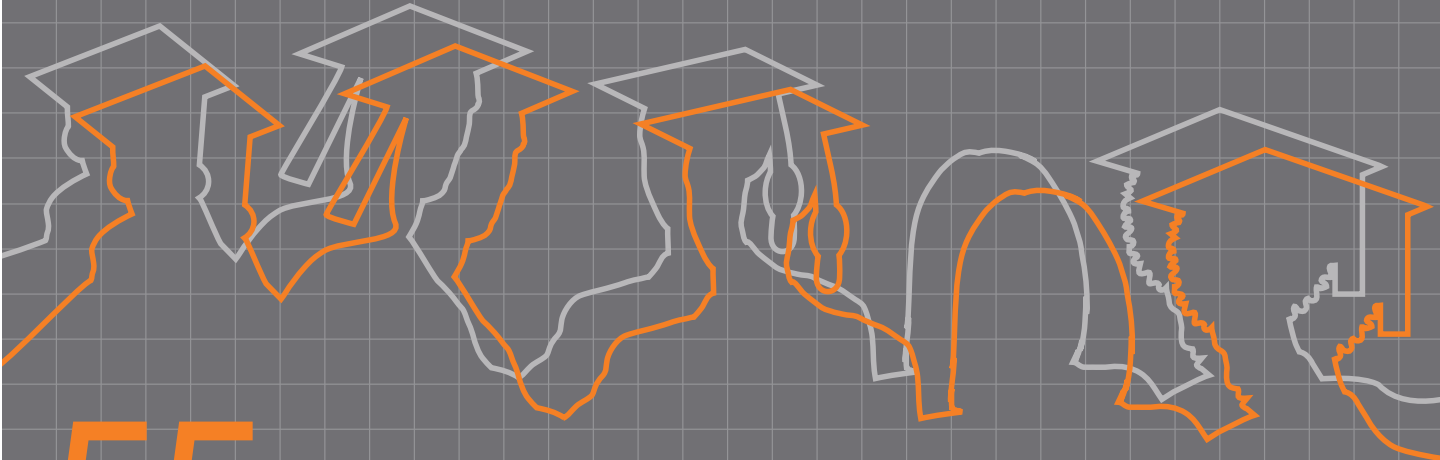
The influence of support for college readiness and access initiatives by Fortune 100 companies can extend beyond the individual students served by such programs. However, relatively few of the college readiness and access programs supported by Fortune 100 corporations specifically align their work with broader educational goals. Microsoft is one company that has designed a college readiness and access initiative to align with educational goals at the district level. The \$6 million Microsoft K12 Math Partnership emphasizes rigorous math and science preparation to improve academic standards and help students better prepare for college. As a part of this initiative, Microsoft has formed partnerships with eight school districts in the Puget Sound region of Washington state to provide professional development for teachers, a best practice guide for math and science instruction, and materials for students to use in class. This project also includes an advocacy and awareness component to push for improved statewide academic standards in math and science (Microsoft Corporation 2007).

Like Microsoft, some Fortune 100 corporations have become involved in advocacy efforts to influence education policy in the areas of college readiness and access at the district, state, or national levels. Nineteen of the 68 corporations that contribute to college readiness and access initiatives also support education policy or advocacy work. Prudential Financial, for example, awarded \$335,000 to Achieve, Inc., an organization that

works with states to bring high school graduation standards into alignment with college and workforce readiness goals. Prudential Financial is joined by several other Fortune 100 corporations, including Boeing, GE, IBM, State Farm, and Washington Mutual, in its support of this work (Achieve, Inc. 2007).

The information described above is helpful in understanding the extent to which Fortune 100 companies are engaged in efforts to support college readiness and access. However, it is more difficult to use this information to draw conclusions about the strategic intent of corporate philanthropy. In some instances, it appears that corporations have an overarching strategy in making their funding decisions and have taken steps to highlight their work in the college readiness and access arena on their Web sites. In other instances, college readiness and access is not highlighted as a funding priority, but our analysis nonetheless indicated that significant support is directed toward such programs.

Better understanding the relationship between corporate philanthropic strategies and support for college readiness and access was a key focus of this study and required taking a closer look at some of the corporations that make college readiness and access a strategic funding priority. The case studies that follow were developed through a combination of interviews and document review and serve as examples of the strategies corporations might employ as they choose to focus their philanthropy on college readiness and access.



55

OF THE

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## Case Study: Time Warner Inc.

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Time Warner Inc. works in the field of media and entertainment, including publishing, television and film, and digital media. As of 2007, the company employed more than 86,000 people worldwide and had sales of nearly \$46.5 billion (Hoover's 2008). Education and the arts are core competencies for the company and help shape Time Warner's philanthropic giving. For Time Warner, education philanthropy is primarily aimed at overcoming the academic achievement gap, particularly for historically underrepresented students. To make the biggest impact, the corporation's education giving focuses on three key areas:

- Research and advocacy
- Improving public school leadership
- Increasing college readiness and access for inner-city, low-income youth

In most of these areas, Time Warner emphasizes philanthropic giving in New York City, home to its corporate headquarters.

One of Time Warner's central strategies is to work with well-established college readiness and access organizations with a proven history of success. The corporation does not accept unsolicited proposals, but rather seeks out organizations that fit its model of what makes a college readiness and access program successful. The company looks for organizations that have careful student selection processes, offer targeted and focused programs, provide extensive academic and leadership development opportunities, and continue to support students once they are in college.

Organizations that fit this model and are supported by Time Warner include the Albert G. Oliver Program, College Summit, Let's Get Ready, the Posse Foundation, and Prep for Prep.

Building long-term partnerships is an important aspect of Time Warner's college readiness and access philanthropy. The company's strategy is to understand each potential college readiness and access partner and determine what that organization can contribute to Time Warner's efforts. When meeting with potential partners, the corporation

wants to see if existing programs fit with Time Warner's model, rather than encourage the organizations to tailor their programs to Time Warner's needs. Corporate officials also recognize that these organizations are the experts on college access, and the corporation makes a conscious effort to support the partner organizations' efforts and not to micromanage them or change their identities. As a result, Time Warner cultivates partnerships based on mutual respect and collaboration.

Accountability is also a major concern for Time Warner's philanthropy. Corporate staff members are working to develop detailed metrics to help hold partnering organizations accountable for student success, including tracking student outcomes after they have enrolled in college. The corporation favors long-term partnerships but uses a one- to two-year grant cycle to ensure that these partnerships continue to work effectively. The metrics developed through the accountability initiative will be used to help the corporation determine if each funded organi-

## BUILDING LONG-TERM PARTNERSHIPS IS AN IMPORTANT ASPECT OF TIME WARNER'S COLLEGE READINESS AND ACCESS PHILANTHROPY.

zation, especially those that may not yet be fully developed, is still a good fit for the company's strategic goals. However, Time Warner also recognizes that different organizations will reach these goals in different ways and that accountability efforts must be balanced with attention to the mission and vision of the college readiness and access programs.

Through its support for college readiness and access programs, Time Warner is working to build a pipeline for a diverse future workforce. One way the corporation addresses this need is by offering internship opportunities at Time Warner offices to students from the college readiness and access programs it supports. Time Warner seeks to invest in high-achieving at-risk students who may eventually choose to work in the media and entertainment industry. At the same time, the

college readiness and access programs can provide internship and field experience opportunities for program participants, which adds value for the programs, the students, and Time Warner.

Time Warner sees all of its educational philanthropy as interconnected: research and advocacy initiatives, together with efforts to build stronger leadership in the public schools, help support the college readiness and access goals the company embraces, as do its contributions to national scholarship programs for underserved students. This multilevel strategy is a deliberate effort to build stronger partnerships and produce a greater return on investment while also ensuring that highly motivated but at-risk young people have an opportunity to achieve their full potential.

## Case Study: General Electric

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GE is one of the largest corporations in the world, with 327,000 employees and sales of more than \$172.7 billion in 2007. Technology and innovation have been prime sources for GE's corporate success, with its core businesses in the production of transportation equipment, household appliances, electrical equipment, and lighting (Hoover's 2008). GE's philanthropic investments reflect this history and the company's core competencies in science, math, and business development. Education, in particular, has always been a cornerstone of General Electric's philanthropy, starting with a contribution to the United Negro College Fund over 50 years ago.

For years, by its own admission, the GE Foundation contributed a great deal of money to various nonprofit organizations without much thought to a philanthropic strategy. At one point, for example, the foundation had more than 400 grants in 35 thematic areas. Several years ago, corporate and foundation leaders realized that, in order to maximize GE's philanthropic impact, they needed to return to education as a core mission. They also chose to focus their efforts on a single signature initiative that would be sustainable, replicable, and potentially scalable and would make a significant impact on improving college-going rates in selected communities.

Two programs already supported by the GE Foundation stood out as models for a new initiative: the College Bound program, a college readiness and access program located in 18 schools around the country; and Math Excellence, a program that works with higher education institutions to improve math education in middle schools as a way to enhance college and workforce preparation. GE had already invested a substantial amount of money in these programs—\$30 million over 15 years for College Bound and \$10 million for Math Excellence—and both had shown strong positive outcomes but were not easily replicable or scalable. By combining the two programs

into a district-level college readiness and access reform effort, GE created its Developing Futures in Education program, intended "to improve student achievement scores in math and science, close achievement gaps, and increase the number of students entering college" (General Electric 2007). The company has committed to investing \$100 million over the next five years in five or more school districts, all of which are "GE communities" where the corporation has a large facility and many of its employees live and work.

Stakeholder engagement has been central to the success of this reform effort. In each school district, steps are taken to open lines of communication among superintendents, school board members, principals, and educators as well as representatives of businesses and community-based organizations. The goal is to create a community structure that pushes for increased college readiness and access by involving all local organizations that care about educational success for young people. In some communities, GE acts as the convener for these organizations; in others, a functional coalition already existed. The key is to gain buy-in from a range of partners to start working toward a coherent and adaptable plan for systemic change.

## GE CHOSE TO FOCUS ON HELPING ALL CHILDREN GAIN THE CHANCE TO ATTEND COLLEGE IN A WORLD WHERE GRADUATING FROM HIGH SCHOOL IS NO LONGER ENOUGH TO ENSURE ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY.

GE's own expertise plays an important role in this process. The company provides a full-time program manager at each Developing Futures site to serve as a corporate representative, coach, and convener of the diverse group of stakeholders. The presence of local program managers encourages greater accountability and closer ties to the community, all of which contribute to making change sustainable. GE also offers consulting services to the school districts as needed. For example, GE executives helped one school district revamp its information technology system and conducted a human resources audit for another. GE employees are encouraged to volunteer in the local Developing Futures program, which helps them both to better appreciate the challenges faced by the school system and to feel good about giving back to the community.

The Developing Futures program also places a good deal of emphasis on program evaluation. By partnering with the American Institutes for Research (AIR), the GE Foundation can improve and expand the program and ensure accountability in the school districts it supports. AIR has worked with the school districts to define key metrics that can be used to measure progress in areas of programmatic focus without overtaxing the district's data collection capacity. An important

aspect of this process has been to help local stakeholders understand the purpose of the evaluation and increase their participation in the process.

The GE Foundation's choice of the Developing Futures in Education program as its signature initiative was fueled by the recognition that there has been a shift in the global economy from manufacturing to information technology. As a result, GE chose to focus on helping all children gain the chance to attend college in a world where graduating from high school is no longer enough to ensure economic opportunity. Through its partnerships with AIR and other organizations, including the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, the National Governors Association, and the Education Commission of the States, the GE Foundation has also leveraged the success of its own program to support broader efforts to push for improved college readiness and access at the state and national levels, reflecting its core commitment to education.

# Corporate Strategies for Investing in College Readiness and Access

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Interviews with several corporate leaders and others involved in corporate-sponsored college readiness and access initiatives demonstrated that many Fortune 100 companies seem to have developed strategic ways of addressing the need for increased readiness and access to post-secondary education. These strategies fall into four categories: corporate priorities, data-driven decision making, effective partnerships, and sustainability and wider impact.

## **CORPORATE PRIORITIES**

As might be expected, corporations are investing in college readiness and access to develop a workforce aligned with corporate and industry needs. As both interviews and reviews of corporate Web sites indicated, corporations are also most often investing in programs that are located in the areas where their employees and customers live and work. Microsoft, for instance, developed its K12 Math Partnership in Puget Sound with the goals of identifying a signature issue, focusing on education (a decision based on employee preferences), linking to core business imperatives by emphasizing math and science, and being a good neighbor in the local community. GE's Developing Futures in Education program, located in five "GE communities" where many GE employees live and work, tries to expand the potential GE workforce by improving students' college readiness in math and science.

The Boeing Corporation's experience demonstrates the extent to which this model can influence corporate philanthropy. Boeing sees its educational philanthropy, including college readiness and access, as part of an overall vision of workforce development starting at birth and going through retirement. The corporation supports interventions at a number of key points in this pipeline, including early learning initiatives that sustain children's social, emotional, and cognitive development; efforts

to develop high-quality learning environments in primary and secondary education; and investments in colleges and universities. Current employees are asked to give back to the community by participating in these wide-ranging initiatives, thereby enhancing employee development and retention, and retirees are encouraged to consider teaching as a post-retirement career. From this perspective, preparing children for college readiness begins very early, perhaps even before they start school, and requires excellent teachers and a strong emphasis on math, science, and literacy, all in an effort to ensure that children have what they need to succeed in work and life and that Boeing has a pool of college-educated workers to advance its corporate goals.

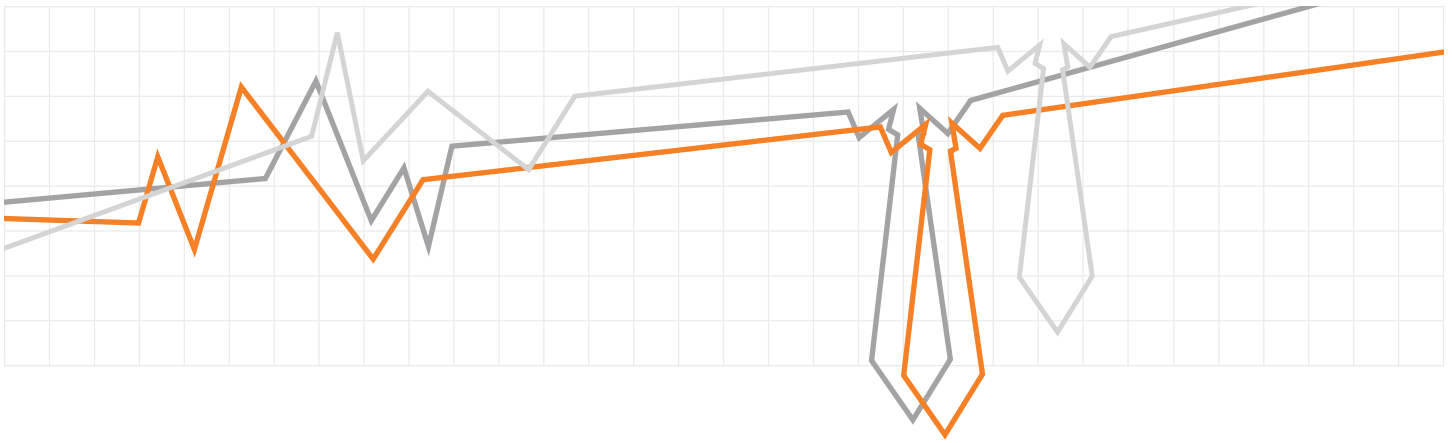
## **DATA-DRIVEN DECISION MAKING**

Understanding educational challenges and their solutions is a major concern for corporations as they select philanthropic initiatives to support. According to those interviewed, executives want to have a firm grasp of the problems associated with college readiness and access and what researchers have proposed as effective solutions before they invest in a particular initiative. This interest in data-driven decision making encourages some corporations to fund research in the area of college readiness and access as well as to support programmatic work.

Microsoft used both these strategies in developing its K12 Math Partnership initiative. With Microsoft funding, AIR surveyed the existing research on student success in math and science and concluded that enrolling in eighth-grade algebra allows students to take important higher-level math and science courses in high school and that rigorous math and science preparation for all students in middle school helps close achievement gaps between ethnic and socioeconomic groups. As Microsoft and AIR worked together to build the K12 Math Partnership initiative, AIR developed a “field guide” for educators showing how research in this area could be put into practice to improve math and science education in Washington state schools (Microsoft and AIR 2006; 2007).

As corporations shift their focus to a more strategic philanthropic model in their support for college readiness and access, collecting high-quality data also becomes an important way to ensure that each funded initiative is held accountable for using grant funds appropriately and producing the promised outcomes, as the case studies of GE and Time Warner demonstrate. Other companies use this model of accountability in their college readiness and access philanthropy, as well. Boeing, for instance, puts measurable results first and foremost in making the decision to fund a particular program, and staff members focus on defining and measuring program success.

**SOME CORPORATIONS ARE BEGINNING TO RECOGNIZE THAT THEY CAN PLAY A ROLE IN SHAPING POLICY CHANGES IN THE AREA OF COLLEGE READINESS AND ACCESS RATHER THAN SIMPLY FOCUSING ON PROGRAMMATIC SUPPORT.**



### EFFECTIVE PARTNERSHIPS

As the case studies of Time Warner and GE show, corporations often want to form ongoing and reciprocal partnerships with the college readiness and access organizations they fund, a shift in philanthropic strategy from a time when a long-term relationship between a corporation and a nonprofit organization might simply have meant that the corporation provided annual funding to the nonprofit—what State Farm calls “checkbook philanthropy” (State Farm Insurance 2007). Time Warner, in particular, looks to fund college readiness and access organizations whose program model and vision already fit with the company’s goals rather than asking organizations to tailor themselves to fit Time Warner’s interests. Time Warner also recognizes that, while achieving mutually agreed-upon goals is a key part of the funding process, the way an organization reaches those goals will be determined by the grantee’s mission and vision. One grantee may, for example, focus more on mentoring while another emphasizes academic enrichment, but as long as both programs can demonstrate that they assist students in preparing to enroll and succeed in college, Time Warner is content to let the college readiness and access experts who run the programs work in their own ways.

Many corporations also are beginning to develop partnerships with external content experts and organizations that can help them think through and implement effective college readiness and access programs. GE, for example, has partnered with the National Science Teachers Association to create an online professional development tool for teachers in the Developing Futures districts, sought assistance from the National Staff Development Council to produce coaching models for use with

teachers in the funded districts, and works closely with AIR researchers to evaluate and improve the Developing Futures program. One of GE’s Developing Futures school districts—Atlanta—has also received support from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. The local GE Foundation representative has biweekly conversations with the Gates program officer, and the two organizations cooperate when conducting regular assessments of program implementation and outcomes, allowing both foundations to maximize the value of their contributions to college readiness and access in this community.

Microsoft’s K12 Math Partnership initiative is a good example of the extent to which college readiness and access initiatives rely on partnerships. As noted above, Microsoft turned initially to AIR as a research provider and thought partner when it was considering starting a college readiness and access initiative in the Seattle area. As the program has moved from conceptualization to implementation, however, AIR’s role has been reduced, and Microsoft has taken on a new partner: the Puget Sound Educational Service District (PSESD), a regional education agency that provides support services to public and charter schools in the Puget Sound area (PSESD 2007). PSESD helps school districts complete proposals for funding from the initiative, oversees distribution and use of project resources, and convenes an assessment committee that works to diagnose student needs and assess project results. These partnerships have enabled Microsoft to quickly build a stable and effective research-based college readiness and access initiative with the potential for future replication.

## CORPORATIONS OFTEN SEE THEMSELVES AS PLAYING A KEY ROLE IN BRINGING STAKEHOLDERS TO THE TABLE.

In addition to their support for specific initiatives, corporations often see themselves as playing a key role in bringing stakeholders to the table. In the area of college readiness and access, this can mean serving as a convener or supporting an existing coalition of educators, policymakers, schools, nonprofits, parents, and students who can work together to identify community needs and shape their programs in response. In its Developing Futures program, for example, GE emphasizes the importance of engaging the school board, superintendent, and teachers union before starting work in a particular district. The company believes that this process leads to closer cooperation between school administrators and teachers in funded districts.

### **SUSTAINABILITY AND WIDER IMPACT**

Ongoing involvement with supported college readiness and access programs is important, but many companies do not intend to provide financial support indefinitely. Corporate leaders interviewed indicated their preference for a clear sustainability plan prior to the termination of corporate funding, so that the corporation has some assurance the program will live on past the initial investment. Strategies to achieve this goal can include providing seed money to build organizational capacity and tapering grant funding to promote outside fundraising. When identifying potential education grantees, for example, Boeing looks for organizations where its investment can serve as a catalyst to move those organizations toward reaching their potential. Boeing sees the corporate funding as a way to help the grantee organizations make a leap forward rather than simply providing regular and general support for their existing programs.

Interviews also suggest that some corporations are beginning to recognize that they can play a role in shaping policy changes in the area of college readiness and access rather than simply focusing on programmatic support. These corporations are working through advocacy groups and coalitions to push for systemic change. In one such project, Boeing is working with the Council of Chief State School Officers to set up a national early learning policy center that would function as a centralized source of information on early learning that states and communities can use to push for improved programs. Other advocacy projects take a more state-level focus. Microsoft, for example, participates actively in the College and Work Ready Agenda, a Washington state coalition of businesses and nonprofit organizations that works to improve K–12 education, particularly in math and science, and to increase the number of students who graduate from in-state universities with degrees in high-demand fields (College and Work Ready Agenda 2007).

The interviews with corporate leaders and others involved in corporate-sponsored college readiness and access initiatives demonstrate a fundamental change in the way some corporations are approaching the issue of college readiness and access. Their understanding of college readiness and access has evolved to include not only financial aid but also support to ensure that students have the necessary college knowledge and academic preparation to enroll and succeed in college. This approach to corporate philanthropy has the potential to promote long-term change, not only for the students directly helped by these programs, but for all American students for whom access to postsecondary education may be a crucial factor in building a successful future.

# Conclusions

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Those familiar with the topic of corporate philanthropy in education recognize the challenges in attempting to assess the status of such initiatives. Data limitations, as well as a lack of research and resources, can hamper the ability of corporations to understand the important contributions they can make to public education. These same issues make understanding the specific subcategory of college readiness and access initiatives even more challenging. Despite these difficulties, this report has shown that many Fortune 100 companies are actively supporting college readiness and access initiatives, even if they do not highlight their support in the most effective ways. Moreover, these corporations are keenly aware of the active investment they make in their future workforce and local communities through these programs. This finding establishes an important benchmark regarding corporate involvement in college readiness and access initiatives and suggests that further research in this area is vitally needed.

Ultimately, this report suggests that effective college readiness and access initiatives must address three barriers to college readiness and access: college knowledge, financial resources, and academic preparation. Findings from this study indicate that the philanthropic activity of Fortune 100 companies can help address these barriers. Both Time Warner and GE have designed systemic philanthropic efforts that address all dimensions of college readiness and access. Furthermore, there appears to be a general willingness to allow grantees to help define both the problems and solutions facing college readiness and access.

On the other hand, the findings indicate that not all corporations that support college readiness and access initiatives are making this support publicly known. If corporations are to spark change, they must be clear leaders and urge others to follow their example. The need for—and the individual organization's support for—improved college readiness and access should be distinctly highlighted on the corporate Web site and in other public communications.

This study also suggests that a number of Fortune 100 companies are adopting general principles of good philanthropic practice when supporting college readiness and access initiatives. Although a stronger public display of this work could have a domino effect on other organizations, these

**ULTIMATELY, THIS REPORT SUGGESTS THAT EFFECTIVE COLLEGE READINESS AND ACCESS INITIATIVES MUST ADDRESS THREE BARRIERS TO COLLEGE READINESS AND ACCESS: COLLEGE KNOWLEDGE, FINANCIAL RESOURCES, AND ACADEMIC PREPARATION.**

corporations are nonetheless thinking strategically about their investments in order to have the greatest impact. They use research to the extent possible to better understand the problems and challenges they face. They emphasize accountability and the importance of measuring results, and they seek to move beyond support of specific programs and to promote broader policy change. These corporations have also come to see their philanthropic investments as collaborations among organizations with different areas of expertise, rather than simply relationships between donors and grantees.

Corporations are rightly concerned with both the long-term sustainability of the initiatives they support and the potential for leveraging the work of the partnership to achieve the broadest possible

impact. The prevalence of these investment strategies in the area of college readiness and access may reflect a wider move toward a more hands-on form of philanthropy in which corporations work with nonprofit organizations, foundations, and government agencies to promote social change. We hope these behaviors will be adopted by other corporations, including those with varying levels of philanthropic resources, that are not yet investing in college readiness and access but are seeking to make more informed investments in this area. Ideally, the grant-making lessons these corporations have learned in other areas will be applicable to this work as well, ultimately ensuring stronger, more strategic education investments from the start.

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