Student Upward Mobility Initiative
Launching Mid-March 2024

We all want children to grow up to be successful, thriving adults. Parents, educators, and policymakers advise kids to go to school, get good grades, and graduate. That good advice is not enough. We need to know which PK–12 skills and competencies boost students’ long-term success and how the contexts students exist in, such as the school system or their neighborhood, affect those outcomes.

THIS INITIATIVE

Our mission is to support students’ economic mobility by establishing a set of skills and competencies in PK–12 education that educators and policymakers can use to shape practices, programs, interventions, and broader systems change.

With only a limited evidence base on how education connects to economic mobility, the field has a long way to go. The Student Upward Mobility Initiative will accelerate progress and increase opportunities for research by funding innovative projects, improving researchers’ access to the data assets needed for this work, synthesizing research, and building a field of education-to-economic-mobility scholars.

OUR 2024 REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

To strengthen our understanding of how PK–12 education affects students’ later economic mobility, we seek proposals that develop new or improved PK–12 measures or that connect measures of PK–12 skills and competencies to economic mobility, while ensuring we think about individuals in context.

We expect to fund $3 million in research grants, ranging from $50,000 to $500,000, through this year’s competition. To broaden and diversify the field of education-to-economic-mobility researchers, this RFP seeks to promote racial, ethnic, gender, disciplinary, institutional, and geographic diversity and will prioritize applications from scholars who are underrepresented in the social sciences.

Our priority areas are

- **Developing new or improved PK–12 measures.** Projects will develop (more) reliable, scalable, or accurate measures across academic achievement, "noncognitive" factors, health and well-being, social capital, and career preparation.
  - Measures must have a clearly articulated conceptual link to economic mobility,
  - Be measured or measurable in the PK–12 school environment, and
  - Be malleable in the school context.

Please connect with us by emailing SUMI@urban.org or contacting SUMI’s project director, Maggie Reeves, mreeves@urban.org.
- **Connecting PK–12 outcomes to economic mobility.** Projects will generate evidence on the extent to which one or more measures of PK–12 skills and competencies are correlated with economic mobility.
  - Measures must have a clearly articulated conceptual link to economic mobility,
  - Connect PK–12 data for students from economically disadvantaged backgrounds to economic mobility data, and
  - Consider how these outcomes exist in contexts in which the students learn and live.

**Improving Data Assets.** Much of the research solicited in this RFP will rely on researchers’ access to longitudinal datasets that follow students from PK–12 into adulthood. But researchers’ access to these types of data is still rare. To broaden the opportunity for education-to-economic-mobility research, we are eager to support existing data assets that need additional funding for researchers to use them for SUMI projects and other analyses.

Please contact SUMI@urban.org if you believe your data asset could be mobilized for a portfolio of Student Upward Mobility Initiative research.

**WHAT’S NEXT?**

Our website (studentupwardmobility.urban.org) launches March 11, which will include our full RFP and application website, a photoblog with teachers and parents from DC Public Schools, a synthesis of the extant research, and a host of tools for applicants.

**STUDENT UPWARD MOBILITY INITIATIVE’S ADVISORY COUNCIL**

The advisory council helps shape the initiative by informing funding priorities, outreach, proposal strategies, and field building.

- **Rekha Balu**, Director of Federal Equity Initiatives and Co–Vice President, Office of Race and Equity Research, Urban Institute
- **Jennifer Bell-Ellwanger**, President and CEO, Data Quality Campaign
- **Mesmin Destin**, Associate Professor of Psychology, Faculty Director of Student Access and Enrichment, Northwestern University
- **Angela Duckworth**, Rosa Lee and Egbert Chang Professor of Psychology, University of Pennsylvania; Cofounder and CEO, Character Lab
- **Camille Farrington**, Managing Director and Senior Research Associate, University of Chicago Consortium on School Research
- **John Freidman**, Briger Family Distinguished Professor of Economics and International and Public Affairs, Brown University; Founding Codirector, Opportunity Insights
- **Andrew Ho**, Charles William Eliot Professor of Education, Harvard Graduate School of Education
- **Heather Hough**, Executive Director, Policy Analysis for California Education, Stanford University
- **Pedro Noguera**, Emery Stoops and Joyce King Stoops Dean, Rossier School of Education, University of Southern California
- **Gene Pinkard**, Director, K–12 Leadership, Aspen Institute
- **LaShawn Richburg-Hayes**, Vice President, Education, Westat Insight
- **Jesse Rothstein**, Carmel P. Friesen Professor of Public Policy and Economics; Director, California Policy Lab, University of California, Berkeley