DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

# Collaborative Urban and Greater Minnesota Educators of Color Grant (CUGMEC) Consolidated Report for Fiscal Year 2025 (FY25)

As defined under Minnesota Statutes 2024, section 122A.635, subdivision 4

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## Legislative Charge

Under Minnesota Statutes 2024, section 122A.635, subdivision 4, the Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) must, by November 1 of each year, "post a report on its website summarizing the activities and outcomes of grant recipients and results that promote sharing of effective practices and lessons learned among grant recipients."

While this is not a formal legislative report, this report will be shared with the chairs and leads of the education finance and policy committees in the House and Senate upon publication.

This report is focused on grant activities from July 1, 2024, through June 30, 2025, or FY25.

## Program Information

Originally administered by the Minnesota Department of Education (MDE), the legislatively established Collaborative Urban Educators (CUE) grant was created in 1997 to increase the number of teacher candidates of color and American Indian teacher candidates (referred to hereafter as TOCAIT candidates[1]) who meet the requirements for a teaching license. In 2019, the grant became competitive, was renamed the CUGMEC grant, and its administration was transferred to the Professional Educator Licensing and Standards Board (PELSB). During the 2025 legislative session, administration of the grant transitioned back to MDE, and the program was renamed the Educator Tuition Assistance Program (ETAP)[2]. The purpose of the funding continues to focus on increasing the number of teacher candidates of color and American Indian teacher candidates who meet the requirements for a Tier 3 teaching license.

This grant provides targeted financial assistance through scholarships and stipends to reduce the financial burden of teacher preparation programs. By lowering cost barriers, the program supports the recruitment and retention of a more diverse and well-prepared educator workforce. Grant funding may also support programmatic efforts such as offering targeted advising and mentoring, providing academic support for licensure assessments, developing supportive community building activities, and covering related staffing expenses.

In FY25, there were a total of 14 grantees receiving a total of $5,340,000 in funding. To view a list of the FY25 grantees and award amounts, see the Appendix in this report. CUGMEC awardees were required to submit a report to MDE by August 15, 2025. The report included two components:

- A Program Narrative summarizing the teacher preparation program's efforts to recruit, retain, and support teacher candidates who are of color or Indigenous. This section also addressed key successes, challenges, and lessons learned to inform future work.

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[1] Teachers of Color and American Indian Teachers forms the acronym "TOCAIT." Since teacher candidates are not yet licensed teachers, the phrase TOCAIT candidates will be used in this report as a shorthand.
[2] Though "Educator Tuition Assistance Program (ETAP)" is the name of this grant moving forward, this report will use "Collaborative Urban and Greater Minnesota Educators of Color (CUGMEC)" as the name for the grant, since this report is based on CUGMEC grant activities from July 1, 2024, through June 30, 2025, (or, FY 25).

- Program Data documenting the impact of CUGMEC funding using data from the 2024-25 academic year.

Additionally, there were three grantees who implemented a CUGMEC grant during FY25 from awards in previous years. These grantees also provided MDE with annual report information that is also included in this report.

## Analysis

Given the focus of the CUGMEC grant is to increase the number of TOCAIT candidates, the data collected from grantees include several data points to monitor along the candidate's journey from enrollment at the institution, to enrollment in the teacher preparation program (TPP), and ultimately to completion of the licensure program with recommendation for licensure. The following tables include results for each grantee active in FY25 and program wide totals.

A note of caution regarding the reported data below. All grantees submitted reported information to the best of their abilities. That said, the authors of this report suspect that reporting errors and inconsistencies are present. We caution readers to not draw too many conclusions from the reported information.

The following table shows the number of TOCAIT candidates enrolled at the teacher preparation program unit as well as the percentage TOCAIT candidates enrolled at the unit of all candidates enrolled at the unit.

**Candidate Enrollment**

| Grantee Name | Number of TOCAIT candidates **enrolled** at the unit | Percentage of TOCAIT candidates **enrolled** at the unit of all teacher candidates **enrolled** at the unit |
|---|---|---|
| Augsburg University | 95 | 37.55% |
| Bemidji State University | 51 | 10.92% |
| Concordia College - Moorhead | 43 | 67.00% |
| Concordia University - St. Paul | 107 | 36.00% |
| Hamline University | 60 | 21.00% |
| Metro State University | 286 | 67.00% |
| MN State University - Mankato | 79 | 12.00% |
| Southwest MN State University | 29 | 6.00% |
| St. Benedict/St. John's University | 22 | 11.82% |
| St. Catherine's University | 51 | 18.00% |
| St. Mary's University | 24 | 12.30% |
| University of MN - Duluth | 16 | 5.02% |
| University of MN - Morris | 17 | 30.00% |
| University of MN - Twin Cities | 99 | 24.40% |

| Grantee Name | Number of TOCAIT candidates **enrolled** at the unit | Percentage of TOCAIT candidates **enrolled** at the unit of all teacher candidates **enrolled** at the unit |
|---|---|---|
| University of St. Thomas | 160 | 25.00% |
| **Program Totals** | **1139** | **25.6%** |

There is a wide range across grantees when it comes to program enrollment of eligible candidates (TOCAIT) for this grant. The range of enrollment spans from 16 (UofM-Duluth) to 286 (Metro State) with a median of 51 and an average of 76.

The range of representation in the unit (or the percentage of TOCAIT candidates of the entire enrollment in the unit) spans from 5.02% (University of MN-Duluth) to 67% (Concordia-Moorhead and Metro State) with a median of 21% and an average of 25.6%.

Higher (or lower) comparative enrollment of TOCAIT candidates is an inconsistent predictor of being the highest (or lowest) comparative percentage of representation of TOCAIT candidates in the teacher preparation program. For example:

- Of the three highest numbers for enrollment (Metro State (286), St. Thomas (160), and Concordia-St. Paul (107)), only Metro State (67%) is tied for the highest percentage. St. Thomas (25%) is sixth highest and Concordia-St. Paul (36%) is fourth highest.
- Of the three lowest numbers for enrollment (University of MN-Duluth (16), University of MN-Morris (17), St. Benedict/St. John's (22)), only the University of MN-Duluth (5.02%) is in the bottom three of this cohort of grantees (Southwest State (6%) and Bemidji State (10.92) are second and third lowest, respectively).

The following table shows the number of TOCAIT candidates supported by CUGMEC grant funds with direct financial assistance during the academic year as well as the percentage of TOCAIT candidates who are supported by grant funds of all teacher candidates.

**Candidates Receiving Financial Assistance**

| Grantee Name | Total Number of TOCAIT candidates who **are supported by CUGMEC funds with direct financial assistance** during the academic reporting year | Percentage of TOCAIT candidates **supported by CUGMEC funds with direct financial assistance** during the academic reporting year of all teacher candidates. |
|---|---|---|
| Augsburg University | 79 | 83.00% |
| Bemidji State University | 39 | 13.22% |
| Concordia College - Moorhead | 19 | 44.00% |
| Concordia University - St. Paul | 88 | 82.00% |
| Hamline University | 43 | 92.00% |
| Metro State University | 89 | 31.00% |
| MN State University - Mankato | 69 | 10.00% |
| Southwest MN State University | unreported | unreported |
| St. Benedict/St. John's University | 20 | 10.70% |
| St. Catherine's University | 18 | 100.00% |
| St. Mary's University | 4 | 100.00% |
| University of MN - Duluth | 16 | 11.04% |
| University of MN - Morris | 9 | 100.00% |
| University of MN - Twin Cities | 78 | 100.00% |
| University of St. Thomas | 99 | 15.00% |
| **Program Totals** | **670** | **56.57%** |

The range total TOCAIT candidates receiving financial support (and the related percentage of candidates) varies widely in this table as well, and there are some errors in the reported data to note.

The relationship of this table to the previous is as follows, using Augsburg's reporting as an example. Augsburg reported 95 TOCAIT candidates enrolled at the unit, 79 of whom received CUGMEC financial support, so 83% of the candidates received support. However, carrying that same formula forward to other grantees reveals some misreported information. As MDE assumes leadership of this grant, we will take this as a lesson learned and work with grantees to clarify the reporting tools and reported data. As we collaborated with PELSB on the transition of this grant, we did not have sufficient time to work with grantees to correct data.

With that said, it is fair to say that the intent of the program is to provide scholarship support for any TOCAIT candidates who have a financial need, while grant funds remain. The CUGMEC statute operating at the time of

the FY25 reports included a complicated financial structure for determining scholarship aid that was challenging for both PELSB and grantees to administer. For FY26 and beyond, that element of the grant has been simplified.

The following table shows the total number of TOCAIT candidates who are supported with other programmatic supports (e.g., affinity groups, study groups, or other supports to assist candidates to matriculate through the program) as well as the percentage of TOCAIT candidates supported with other programmatic supports of all teacher candidates.

**Candidates Receiving Programmatic Support**

| Grantee Name | Total Number of TOCAIT candidates who are **supported with other programmatic supports** | Percentage of TOCAIT candidates supported **with other programmatic supports** of all teacher candidates |
|---|---|---|
| Augsburg University | 58 | 61.00% |
| Bemidji State University | 51 | 10.92% |
| Concordia College – Moorhead[1] | N/A | N/A |
| Concordia University - St. Paul | 88 | 82.00% |
| Hamline University | 41 | 96.00% |
| Metro State University | 140 | 49.00% |
| MN State University - Mankato[1] | N/A | N/A |
| Southwest MN State University | unreported | unreported |
| St. Benedict/St. John's University | 20 | 10.70% |
| St. Catherine's University | 29 | 100.00% |
| St. Mary's University | N/A | N/A |
| University of MN - Duluth | 11 | 68.75% |
| University of MN - Morris | 17 | 30.00% |
| University of MN - Twin Cities | 78 | 100.00% |
| University of St. Thomas | 160 | 25.00% |
| **Program Totals** | **693** | **52.78%** |

[1]N/A – Grant funds were not used for other programmatic support. Note: Grantees are not required to use grant funds to provide other programmatic supports.

This table has similar reporting challenges as the previous one. Again, MDE will work with grantees to improve this data element moving forward.

The following table shows the total number of TOCAIT candidates in the process of licensure completion during the academic reporting year as well as the percentage of TOCAIT candidates in the process of licensure completion of all candidates.

**Candidates and Licensure Completion**

| Grantee Name | Total Number of TOCAIT candidates **in the process of licensure completion** during the academic reporting year | Percentage of TOCAIT **candidates in the process of licensure completion** of all candidates |
|---|---|---|
| Augsburg University | 17 | 25.00% |
| Bemidji State University | 7 | 8.98% |
| Concordia University - St. Paul | 21 | 28.00% |
| Hamline University | 20 | 28.34% |
| Metro State University | 22 | 61.10% |
| MN State University - Mankato | 31 | 12.00% |
| Southwest MN State University | 29 | 6.00% |
| St. Benedict/St. John's University | 2 | 4.54% |
| St. Catherine's University | 12 | 100.00% |
| St. Mary's University | 24 | 12.30% |
| University of MN - Duluth | 7 | 15.00% |
| University of MN - Morris | 2 | 21.00% |
| University of MN - Twin Cities | 99 | 24.40% |
| University of St. Thomas | 43 | 39.00% |
| **Program Totals** | **336** | **27.55%** |

All of the data collected from grantees and assembled in this report are required elements under the CUGMEC law. With that said, the above table and the next table regarding licensure recommendation pose significant challenges to analyze properly, as the data collected is not related to how a cohort matriculates through a program but is a measure of whichever cohort is present at that stage in the licensure journey.

The reported data also does not answer the degree to which institutions supported and retained TOCAIT candidates through completion of the program (the above table) and recommendation for licensure (the next table). That is, the raw number of candidates does not indicate how many candidates *should* have completed the program at the time of reporting but did not. It does report the degree to which there is demographic representation among program completers, but the missing comparison group is a data point among all program completers regardless of degree. With that missing element, we could surmise the degree to which the teacher preparation program is supporting and retaining students of color and American Indian students at worse, similar, or greater rates than other programs at the institution.

Further, the percentage representation of the TOCAIT candidates tells an incomplete (and, as mentioned earlier in this report, some reporting is inaccurate) story. We lack a proper comparison group. If an institution reports that 25% of all candidates who are in the process of licensure completion are TOCAIT, is this a good or not so good number? It would depend on the demographics of all candidates *who were anticipated to* complete during this reported year, and that percentage of TOCAIT depends on how well both comparison groups (TOCAIT completers and White completers) performed that year.

MDE will continue to collect and report data required under the law, and we look forward to improving the data collected and our process so that fair interpretations or conclusions may result from the reporting process.

The following table shows total number of TOCAIT candidates who were recommended for licensure in the field for which they were prepared as well as percentage of TOCAIT candidates in the recommended for licensure in the field for which they were prepared compared with all teacher candidates recommended for licensure in the field for which they were prepared.

**Candidates Recommended for Licensure**

| Grantee Name | Total Number of TOCAIT candidates who were **recommended for licensure** in the field for which they were prepared | Percentage of TOCAIT candidates **recommended for licensure** in the field for which they were prepared compared with all teacher candidates **recommended for licensure in the field for which they were prepared** |
|---|---|---|
| Augsburg University | 39 | 39.80% |
| Bemidji State University | 7 | 7.07% |
| Concordia University - St. Paul | 21 | 28.00% |
| Hamline University | 47 | 26.20% |
| Metro State University | 20 | 91.00% |
| MN State University - Mankato | 38 | 12.00% |
| Southwest MN State University | 4 | 4.10% |
| St. Benedict/St. John's University | 1 | 2.27% |
| St. Catherine's University | 6 | 100.00% |
| St. Mary's University | 8 | 13.80% |
| University of MN - Duluth | 7 | 15.00% |
| University of MN - Morris | 2 | 100.00% |
| University of MN - Twin Cities | 36 | 20.11% |
| University of St. Thomas | 19 | 61.00% |
| **Program Totals** | 255 | **37.1%** |

As discussed above, we do not believe accurate interpretations or conclusions can be drawn from this data.

## Program Reflection Summary

During 2024-25, Minnesota higher education institutions used CUGMEC grant funds to expand recruitment, retention, and support for teacher candidates of color and Indigenous students. Efforts included campus visits, community and school outreach, and partnerships with tribal and community colleges. Institutions prioritized financial and academic support through scholarships, stipends, mentoring, advising, and professional development opportunities. These initiatives aimed to reduce barriers such as tuition costs, limited digital access, and isolation, while also building stronger connections between students, faculty, and community partners.

Programs such as Bemidji State's field-based internship for paraprofessionals, Concordia's long-standing Southeast Asian Teacher (SEAT) licensure program for Southeast Asian and immigrant students, and St. Catherine's support for early childhood education candidates highlight tailored approaches to diversifying the teaching workforce. Many institutions emphasized community-building through shared meals, mentorship programs, and affinity groups, while also addressing systemic barriers like high-stakes testing, limited financial aid flexibility, and negative public narratives about the teaching profession. Despite challenges with policy shifts and limited grant funds, schools reported measurable progress in enrollment and persistence of Black, Indigenous, and students of color in teacher preparation pathways.

Overall, the CUGMEC funds have been instrumental in supporting hundreds of candidates across the state through direct scholarships, mentorship, and program innovations. Grantee-reported outcomes include higher enrollment of students of color, stronger partnerships with school districts, and expanded pathways for nontraditional candidates already working in schools. While challenges remain around sustainability, funding limitations, and ongoing challenges related to efforts to diversify the educator workforce, institutions reported that these collective efforts have strengthened both recruitment and retention, reduced financial stress, and created more inclusive and supportive environments for future teachers.

## Grantee Lessons from Implementation

### Collaboration Highlights

Throughout this reporting period, grantees engaged in meaningful collaboration that surfaced several key lessons:

- **Collaboration Enhances Innovation**: Sharing strategies across institutions led to practical, adaptable ideas for mentoring, recruitment, and student support. The open exchange reinforced the value of statewide collaboration in addressing common challenges.
- **Mentorship Structure Matters**: Separating mentor and supervisor roles was identified as a best practice to avoid conflicts of interest and strengthen the quality of support provided to teacher candidates.
- **Flexibility in Scholarship Distribution**: Institutions found success in offering scholarships without requiring the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA), which increased accessibility—particularly for graduate students and those less likely to complete financial aid forms.

- **Affinity Groups Require Creative Scheduling**: While affinity groups are valuable, scheduling remains a challenge, especially for working adults. Institutions shared solutions such as integrating affinity group time into class schedules.
- **Virtual Forums Increase Access**: Online convenings allowed for broader participation and more diverse perspectives, resulting in richer discussions and a stronger sense of community among grantees.

These lessons will inform ongoing program development and help ensure that grant-funded efforts continue to center equity, access, and student success.

## Key Takeaways and Action Steps

Grantee collaborative discussions resulted in the following key strategies to support teacher candidates of color and Indigenous candidates:

**Mentorship Enhancements**

- Develop a mentor model distinct from the student teaching supervisor to avoid conflicts of interest.
- Explore using alumni and field-based mentors as informal supports for teacher candidates.
- Consider peer mentorship programs where feasible, particularly for graduate students.

**Affinity Group Strategies**

- Establish affinity groups with intentional scheduling (e.g., during class time or lunch with food) to accommodate students' busy schedules.
- Host inclusive events (e.g., guest speakers) that support affinity group goals without isolating small student populations.

**Community and Institutional Partnerships**

- Partner with student organizations, other campuses, and external groups (e.g., Black Men Teach, Educators Rising) to build community and expand outreach.
- Strengthen collaboration with admissions and licensure programs to support recruitment and awareness of available supports.

**Recruitment and Outreach**

- Use current students and community partners as ambassadors to promote the program and its benefits.
- Explore more intentional recruitment strategies that reflect the local community and program mission.

**Scholarship Distribution and Financial Aid**

- Continue exploring ways to award funding to students who do not complete a FAFSA but still demonstrate financial need.
- Clarify scholarship eligibility and ensure alignment with institutional financial aid processes.

**Monitoring and Evaluation**

- Implement systems to track progress toward grant objectives using clear, measurable outcomes.
- Regularly collect and act on feedback from students and mentors to improve program effectiveness.

**Statewide Collaboration and Networking**

- Support the idea of an all-CUGMEC student event to foster connection and shared learning across institutions.

- Consider developing an inter-institutional mentoring network to connect candidates with broader support.

**Student Well-being and Support**

- Acknowledge the impact of anxiety and external pressures on Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC) students, especially those with immigrant backgrounds.
- Prioritize regular check-ins and create supportive environments through events and mentorship**.**

## Future Collaboration Recommendations

To strengthen collaboration, participants recommended clearly defining roles and expectations, involving members in agenda-setting, and hosting dedicated CUGMEC sessions during Minnesota Association of Colleges of Teacher Education (MACTE) meetings. These sessions have proven valuable for sharing strategies, building community, and fostering cross-institutional dialogue. Suggestions included increasing the frequency of virtual check-ins, creating statewide networking events for current and former CUGMEC recipients, and incorporating professional development opportunities into future meetings. Participants emphasized the importance of maintaining this collaborative model, leveraging MACTE as a platform for shared learning, and inviting broader participation to ensure equity-focused practices continue to evolve across institutions.

# Conclusion

The CUGMEC grant provided direct financial assistance to 670 teacher candidates of color and American Indian teacher candidates in FY25. Additionally, grantees provided a variety of programmatic support to the TOCAIT candidates and shared practices across and among teacher preparation provider institutions.

CUGMEC was administered by PELSB during FY25, and the program was moved to MDE and renamed ETAP over the summer months. This report was authored by MDE staff with assistance from PELSB.

MDE looks forward to working with ETAP grantees in the future to ensure every student has access to a diverse, qualified and thriving educator workforce.

# Appendix

## Grantee Program Summaries

**Augsburg University—Awarded $700,000 in FY25**

Augsburg University's CUGMEC grant, implemented through the Education Department's Thrive program, have significantly advanced the training and support of Indigenous teacher candidates and candidates of color. Over the past year, the department launched initiatives focused on expanding access, enhancing student success, and deepening community engagement. These included targeted recruitment efforts, inclusive programming, professional development, mentorship, and financial support. Activities such as campus visits, outreach to schools and colleges, speaker events, and community-building gatherings helped foster a welcoming environment. The department also addressed practical needs through tuition assistance, stipends, and digital access tools. These efforts led to increased Black, Indigenous, student of color outreach, higher enrollment, and stronger community partnerships, reflecting meaningful progress toward a more inclusive and supportive educational community that meets the needs of all learners.

**Bemidji State University—Awarded $357,350.50 in FY24**

During the 2024-25 school year, Bemidji State University continued its recruitment and retention efforts by providing direct financial awards and ongoing advising and support to eligible students. Faculty maintained strong connections with regional tribal and community colleges, including Minnesota North and Leech Lake Tribal College, to identify and support potential candidates. Building on previous initiatives, the university developed a new field-based elementary teacher internship program aimed at paraprofessionals working in metro-area schools, in partnership with the Ground UP coalition. This collaboration led to the enrollment of 10 new CUGMEC-eligible students for the Fall 2025 semester. Additionally, students received just-in-time academic advising each semester, while administrative support included enrolling eligible candidates, processing payments, and managing data for grant reporting. Note: This grantee did not receive a FY25 award but previously received a FY24 award and is currently spending down those funds during FY25.

**College of St. Benedict & St. John's University—Awarded $300,000 in FY25**

The Education Department at the College of Saint Benedict and Saint John's University launched the Teacher Leaders of Color (TLOC) program in August 2023 to support and build community among teacher candidates of color. In the 2024-25 academic year, 20 students were accepted into the TLOC cohort and received direct scholarships totaling $69,786, helping to reduce financial barriers. Community-building efforts included professional development events, shared meals, and a Fall Welcome Dinner featuring alumni speakers and mentors. A mentorship program was also launched, connecting students with local teachers of color and alumni, with regular meetings and a check-in event that combined mentorship discussions with social activities. Additionally, individual academic advising was offered to support students facing challenges in their coursework or application process. Note: This grantee also received a FY24 award and is currently in the process of spending down those funds during FY25.

**Concordia College, Moorhead—Awarded $137,500 in FY25**

The Master of Education programs in Teaching and Learning, Health and Physical Education, and World Language Instruction have effectively utilized grant funds to recruit, retain, and support teacher candidates, particularly those from minoritized backgrounds seeking licensure through career changes. While initial recruitment was challenging, alternative outreach strategies such as word of mouth and district emails proved successful. Grant funds were used to support both continuing and new students, with seven students receiving aid in spring 2025 (one of whom graduated and was recommended for licensure), and 18 students supported in summer 2025. The funds have helped alleviate financial burdens, allowing students to progress toward licensure and complete their programs. By fall 2025, most funds will be used, with remaining amounts reserved for student teaching in spring 2026.

**Concordia University-St. Paul—Awarded $725,909.42 in FY24**

Concordia University, Saint Paul, utilizes CUGMEC funding to support its SEAT licensure program, which aims to recruit, prepare, graduate, and support teacher candidates of color and Indigenous backgrounds. Established in 1998, the SEAT program initially focused on Hmong candidates and has since expanded to include individuals from various Southeast Asian, Latin American, and African backgrounds. While Hmong candidates still make up at least 65% of the cohort, the program now welcomes applicants regardless of current employment in schools. SEAT offers two licensure pathways—a Bachelor of Arts and a Master of Arts in Teaching—across 13 teaching licenses and five endorsements, helping to build a more diverse and representative teaching workforce in Minnesota. Note: This grantee did not receive a FY25 award but previously received a FY24 award and is currently spending down those funds during FY25.

**Hamline University—Awarded $600,000 in FY25**

Qualitative data from Hamline University's Center for Excellence in Urban Teaching (CEUT) revealed that students continue to face significant stress due to life responsibilities, high tuition and licensing costs, and feelings of isolation. To address these challenges, CEUT implemented mentoring and affinity groups, which helped students feel more understood, supported, and connected—especially when mentors shared similar racial or cultural backgrounds. While scheduling in-person meetings and the lack of monetary incentives posed challenges, the overall impact of these supports was positive. Grant funds helped reduce financial stress by providing tuition scholarships to 43 undergraduate and graduate teacher candidates, which in turn improved recruitment, retention, degree completion, and job placement. Students reported that these scholarships eased financial burdens, reduced the need to work extra hours, and enhanced their overall satisfaction and sense of belonging in the program.

**Metro State University—Awarded $1,603,600 in FY25**

In 2024-25, a total of 208 students received direct financial support for tuition and fees through one or both CUGMEC grants. These funds enabled the continuation of recruitment scholarships to boost enrollment and supported expanded partnerships with school districts and community organizations. Financial assistance was especially impactful for post-traditional adult students with low incomes and multiple responsibilities. Anticipating uncertainty around future state funding, the program strategically reserved more FY25 funds than expected to ensure maximum direct support could be provided in FY26. Additionally, the grant allowed for the

hiring of an academic advisor/program admission coordinator to offer indirect support to the growing number of diverse teacher candidates.

**Minnesota State University, Mankato—Awarded $300,000 in FY25**

In FY25, Minnesota State University, Mankato allocated the majority of its Round II CUGMEC grant funds—$249,111 of $300,000—to scholarships for students, with 85% of those funds already disbursed and the remainder set to support eligible students in fall 2025 and spring 2026. These scholarships have been vital in retaining students of color and Indigenous students, who currently make up 12% of the teacher preparation program. The grant also supported the development of a mentorship program, compensating mentors of color and providing stipends to student participants, which has increased engagement. While the scholarships significantly help, they only cover part of students' expenses, presenting an ongoing challenge. Recruitment efforts, led by the Director of Recruitment and Retention, have been effective in enrolling students of color, making them eligible for both scholarships and mentoring. Although the mentoring program faced initial delays due to limited staffing, two faculty of color took leadership, successfully launching and sustaining the program by recruiting mentors and incentivizing student participation. Additionally, the Teachers of Tomorrow student organization continues to play a key role in supporting and retaining students of color, even though it is not funded by the grant.

**St. Catherine University—Awarded $100,000 in FY25**

CUGMEC funds at St. Catherine University were used to expand successful recruitment, retention, and induction practices for Indigenous students and students of color, aiming to support over 20% representation in Early Childhood and Education Programs. The majority of funds were awarded directly to students as scholarships, with additional support provided through increased advising, mentorship, flexible completion pathways, and book and fee stipends. The university also helped students access external funding like TEACH grants, allowing them to remain employed in their communities—benefiting both their families and local employers. In FY25, 18 candidates received the maximum scholarship amount (up from 12 the previous year), with 6 graduating, 3 preparing for student teaching in fall 2025, and 7 continuing in the program. Two students changed majors to complete non-licensure degrees, and one opted to pursue licensure through a portfolio route. Overall, the grant significantly supported both recruitment and retention efforts, particularly in the Early Childhood Education program.

**St. Mary's University—Awarded $85,000 FY22**

In 2024-25, Saint Mary's University used CUGMEC grant funds to support three students pursuing a Master of Arts in Teaching (MAT) English as a Second Language (ESL), following the phase-out of its standalone ESL master's program due to declining enrollment. To adapt, the university amended its grant to include MAT candidates, allowing continued support for teacher candidates of color. While CUGMEC funds were not used directly for recruitment, Saint Mary's leveraged a separate five-year Robert Noyce Teaching Scholarship grant to enhance recruitment efforts for underrepresented candidates in Science, Technology Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) education. CUGMEC funds were primarily used for tuition scholarships to aid retention, while the Noyce grant also supports the development of mentoring and induction tools for recent graduates.

Note: This grantee did not receive a FY25 award but was awarded $85,000 in FY22. They are currently in the process of spending down those funds during FY25.

**Southwest Minnesota University—Awarded $415,500 in FY25**

In FY25, Southwest Minnesota State University's School of Education used CUGMEC grant funds to support the recruitment and retention of teacher candidates of color and Indigenous backgrounds. Eleven current candidates received $3,600 in tuition support, and additional scholarships were awarded to new candidates from Marshall and Willmar Public Schools for the 2025-26 academic year. Indirect funds supported the creation of the House of Education, a living and learning community that fosters support and retention through shared housing, advising, and programming. A graduate assistant, funded by the grant, provided ongoing support and organized events for residents. CUGMEC funds also supported professional development through the Hip Hop Literacy Workshop and recruitment events such as the Aspiring Educators' Day and the Aspiring to Be Educators Academy, which offered high school students on-campus experiences and college credit. These efforts collectively enhanced both recruitment and retention of diverse teacher candidates, with continued support planned for FY26.

**University of Minesota, Duluth—Awarded $83,400 in FY25**

In FY25, the University of Minnesota Duluth (UMD) shifted its CUGMEC grant strategy to provide only direct financial awards to eligible Students of Color and Indigenous students, maximizing immediate impact and avoiding delays associated with developing new indirect support programs. Although no new initiatives were launched with this round of funding, students continued to benefit from UMD's robust existing support network, including dedicated faculty and professional advisors, culturally specific advising through the Office of Diversity & Inclusion and the American Indian Learning Resource Center, and opportunities for applied research and community engagement. These efforts align with UMD's strategic commitment to holistic, humanistic, and proactive advising practices that support the whole student. While CUGMEC funds were not used for broader structural or curricular changes, the university remains committed to eliminating barriers and fostering an inclusive environment where Black, Indigenous, and students of color can thrive.

**University of Minnesota, Morris—Awarded $200,000 in FY25**

CUGMEC funding in 2024-25 was used to provide direct scholarships to 12 Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC) undergraduate teacher candidates in Elementary, Secondary, and K–12 programs, with awards ranging from $929 to $3,700 based on financial aid eligibility. While federal financial aid rules limited the ability to use funds as incentives beyond the cost of attendance, the scholarships still played a crucial role in supporting students. Recruitment efforts included sponsoring events for Gateway students (a summer bridge program for low-income students and students of color) and activities through the Education Minnesota Aspiring Educators program. However, challenges included low overall interest in teacher preparation, difficulty filling a peer ambassador role, and societal narratives that discourage entry into the teaching profession. Despite these hurdles, the university saw an increase in eligible candidates enrolled compared to the previous year and remains committed to refining communication, expanding recruitment, and promoting the positive impact of teaching—especially in a state that continues to support DEI initiatives.

**University of Minesota, Twin Cities—Awarded $500,000 in FY25**

CUGMEC grant funds were used to provide direct scholarship support to eligible teacher candidates, aligning with PELSB Standard 16, which emphasizes strategies to recruit, retain, and increase the percentage of candidates of color. Administered through the College of Education and Human Development (CEHD), which oversees 16 initial licensure programs—including early childhood, elementary, ESL, special education, and heritage language instruction—the scholarships help reduce financial barriers for post-baccalaureate students, many of whom are working adults with family responsibilities and existing educational debt. These funds are especially critical during full-time student teaching, which is often unpaid. The Office of Teacher Education and the Multiple Pathways Office ensure that candidates have access to information about scholarships, grants, and awards to support their success in the teacher preparation programs.

**University of St. Thomas—Awarded $400,000 in FY25**

The University of St. Thomas has effectively leveraged CUGMEC funding to provide direct scholarships—up to $4,151 per student—to 99 graduate teacher candidates from August 2024 to August 2025, significantly reducing financial barriers and the need for student loans. In addition to scholarships, the university has expanded recruitment, retention, and induction efforts through community partnerships, targeted advertising, one-on-one advising, networking events, and a new social media campaign to maintain alumni engagement. Notable successes include strong district partnerships with St. Paul Public Schools (SPPS) and (Minneapolis Public Schools (MPS) and plans to expand support to undergraduates through collaboration with Dougherty Family College. However, challenges included the loss of federal Supporting Effective Educator Development (SEED) grant funding, legal considerations, and staffing changes after the departure of the grant's principal investigator. Despite these hurdles, the university remains committed to diversifying the teaching workforce and has restructured staffing to ensure continued success of the CUGMEC program.