DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Educator Tuition Assistance Program (ETAP) Consolidated Report for Fiscal Year 2026 (FY26)

As defined under Minnesota Statutes 2025, section 122A.635, subdivision 4

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As requested by Minnesota Statutes, section 3.197: This report cost approximately $2,008.31 to prepare, including staff time, printing and mailing expenses.

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Table of Contents

For more information: 2

Legislative Charge 4

Program Information 4

Analysis 5

Program Reflection Summary 12

Conclusion 13

Appendix 14

Grantee Program Summaries 14

Legislative Charge

Under Minnesota Statutes 2025, 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."

This report is focused on grant activities from Fiscal Year 2026 (FY26).

Program Information

Originally administered by 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 Collaborative Urban and Greater Minnesota Educators of Color (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). 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.

ETAP 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 FY26, there were a total of 11 grantees receiving a total of $4,300,000 in funding. To view a list of the FY26 grantees and award amounts, see the Appendix in this report. ETAP awardees were required to submit a report to MDE by August 15, 2026. 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.
- Program Data required by statute documenting the impact of ETAP funding using data from the 2025-26 academic year.

[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.

Additionally, four grantees implemented ETAP during FY26 from awards in previous years. These grantees also provided MDE with annual report information that is also included in this report.

Analysis

Given the statutory requirement of the ETAP 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 FY26 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 not to 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	100	36.23%
Bemidji State University	97	3.67%
Concordia College - Moorhead	33	47.00%
Concordia University - St. Paul	116	36.00%
Hamline University	56	22.00%
Metro State University	347	67.00%
Minnesota State University - Mankato	144	17.30%
Southwest Minnesota State University	33	6.40%
St. Benedict/St. John's University	29	13.00%
St. Catherine's University	20	34.50%
St. Cloud State University	108	21.77
St. Mary's University	33	19.00%
University of Minnesota - Duluth	73	16.00%
University of Minnesota - Morris	13	32.00%

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 Minnesota- Twin Cities	144	27.10%
University of St. Thomas	187	29.60%
Program Totals	**1533**	**26.79%**

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 13 (U of Minnesota - Morris) to 347 (Metro State) with a median of 85 and an average of 96.

The range of representation in the unit (or the percentage of TOCAIT candidates of the entire enrollment in the unit) spans from 3.67% (Bemidji State University) to 67% (Metro State) with a median of 24.55% and an average of 26.79%.

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 four highest numbers for enrollment (Metro State (347), University of St. Thomas (187), and Mankato and U of Minnesota- Twin Cities (144), Metro State (67%) is the highest percentage. Augsburg (36.23%) is second highest and Concordia - St. Paul (36%) is the third highest.
- Of the three lowest numbers for enrollment (U of Minnesota - Morris (13), St. Catherine (20), St. Benedicts/St. Johns (29)), only Bemidji State University (3.67%) is in the bottom three of this cohort of grantees (Southwest State (6.4%) and St. Benedict/St. Johns (13%) are second and third lowest, respectively.

The following table shows the number of TOCAIT candidates supported by ETAP 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 ETAP funds with direct financial assistance** during the academic reporting year	Percentage of TOCAIT candidates **supported by ETAP funds with direct financial assistance** during the academic reporting year of all teacher candidates.
Augsburg University	70	25.00%
Bemidji State University	47	8.24%
Concordia College - Moorhead	14	22.00%
Concordia University - St. Paul	112	35.00%
Hamline University	21	20.00%
Metro State University	265	76.00%
Minnesota State University - Mankato	9	1.00%
Southwest Minnesota State University	29	88.00%
St. Benedict/St. John's University	21	9.00%
St. Catherine's University	20	34.5%
St. Cloud State University	18	3.6%
St. Mary's University	13	7.00%
University of Minnesota - Duluth	9	2.00%
University of Minnesota - Morris	13	32.00%
University of Minnesota - Twin Cities	80	15.00%
University of St. Thomas	60	9.50%
Program Totals	**801**	**24.24%**

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 Metro States's reporting as an example. Metro State reported 347 TOCAIT candidates enrolled at the unit, 265 of whom received ETAP financial support, so 76% 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 MDE collaborated with PELSB on the transition of this grant, there was not sufficient time to work with grantees to correct data.

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	96	34.78%
Bemidji State University	97	3.67%
Concordia College - Moorhead[2]	0	0%
Concordia University - St. Paul	112	35.00%
Hamline University[2]	unknown	unknown
Metro State University	347	100.00%
Minnesota State University - Mankato[1]	0	0%
Southwest Minnesota State University[1]	N/A	N/A
St. Benedict/St. John's University	21	9.00%
St. Catherine's University	20	34.50%
St. Cloud State University	18	3.6%
St. Mary's University	15	8.00%
University of Minnesota - Duluth	66	14.50%
University of Minnesota - Morris	13	32.00%
University of Minnesota - Twin Cities	144	27.10%
University of St. Thomas	187	29.60%
Program Totals	**1136**	**23.70%**

[2]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	100	36.23%
Bemidji State University	8	2.67%
Concordia College - Moorhead	33	47.00%
Concordia University - St. Paul	23	34.00%
Hamline University	42	22.00%
Metro State University	30	59.00%
Minnesota State University - Mankato	57	16.70%
Southwest Minnesota State University	10	7.60%
St. Benedict/St. John's University	7	14.00%
St. Catherine's University	3	20.00%
St. Cloud State University	12	13.04%
St. Mary's University	33	19.00%
University of Minnesota - Duluth	13	11.71%
University of Minnesota - Morris	6	32.00%
University of Minnesota - Twin Cities	144	27.17%
University of St. Thomas	5	16.60%
Program Totals	**526**	**23.67%**

All of the data collected from grantees and assembled in this report are required elements under the ETAP 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	11	25.58%
Bemidji State University	7	2.86%
Concordia College - Moorhead	14	64.00%
Concordia University - St. Paul	20	30.00%
Hamline University	14	23.00%
Metro State University	32	65.00%
Minnesota State University - Mankato	56	16.40%
Southwest MN State University	10	7.60%
St. Benedict/St. John’s University	6	11.70%
St. Catherine’s University	3	21.40%
St. Cloud State University	12	13.04%
St. Mary's University	4	13.00%
University of Minnesota - Duluth	13	11.71%

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**
University of Minnesota - Morris	5	29.00%
University of Minnesota - Twin Cities	50	26.60%
University of St. Thomas	43	29.70%
Program Totals	**300**	**24.41%**

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

Program Reflection Summary

Minnesota teacher preparation programs (TPP) leveraged ETAP funding during fiscal year 2026 to reduce financial barriers, improve retention, expand accessible licensure pathways, and strengthen completion outcomes for teacher candidates of color and American Indian teacher candidates. Many TPPs (such as Augsburg, Bemidji State, Metro State, St. Cloud State, Saint Mary's, and University of Minnesota–Twin Cities) used the majority of their funds for direct financial assistance, often noting rising levels of need related to tuition, transportation, housing instability, and other life circumstances. This support consistently helped candidates maintain enrollment, persist through clinical experiences, and progress toward licensure. Several programs reported significant increases in the number of TOCAIT candidates admitted, enrolled, or graduating, demonstrating the impact of sustained financial investment.

In addition to scholarships, TPPs emphasized high-impact supports such as mentorship, advising, affinity groups, community-building events, and culturally sustaining professional development. Programs like Augsburg's Thrive, St. Thomas's cohort-based supports, and Southwest States's House of Education showed that intentional relationship-building and culturally affirming spaces help teacher candidates feel connected and supported. Many universities strengthened partnerships with tribal colleges, school districts, community organizations, paraprofessional networks, and educator-advocacy groups, helping build recruitment support systems and creating flexible, workplace-embedded or online licensure pathways. These efforts widened access for working, or non-traditional students and helped align preparation programs with the diverse needs of teacher candidates.

Across TPPs, several shared lessons emerged: financial aid is most effective when paired with individualized advising, accessible program structures, and strong community partnerships; flexible delivery models such as asynchronous coursework, field-based programs, and online options reduce barriers for working adults; and consistent communication, relationship-based supports, and operational streamlining are essential to retention. Programs also noted challenges related to legal constraints, administrative complexity, transportation barriers, and supporting nontraditional students balancing family, work, and coursework. Despite these challenges, ETAP funding enabled statewide progress toward diversifying Minnesota's educator workforce and ensuring that TOCAIT candidates have the financial, academic, and relational supports needed to succeed.

Conclusion

ETAP grant provided direct financial assistance to 801 teacher candidates of color and American Indian teacher candidates in FY26. Additionally, grantees provided a variety of programmatic support to the TOCAIT candidates and shared practices across and among teacher preparation provider institutions.

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

During the 2025-26 academic year, Augsburg University used ETAP funding to strengthen the recruitment, retention, and preparation of teacher candidates of color and American Indian teacher candidates through the Thrive Program. The Thrive Program focused on helping students not only enter teacher preparation, but also remain enrolled, respond to unexpected challenges, develop as educators, and move toward licensure with a strong sense of belonging and purpose.

Recruitment efforts included visits to high schools, community colleges, higher education fairs, and schools with education-focused career and technical education programs. Staff visited Richfield High School, Eden Prairie High School, Burnsville High School, Camden High School, Normandale Community College, and Minneapolis College. Recruitment activities also took place at various conferences. These opportunities allowed us to introduce students of color to teaching as a meaningful and attainable career. We also strengthened partnerships with organizations such as Black Men Teach, the UpLiFT Culturally Sustaining Mentorship Program, the Teacher Diversity Project Team, the Minnesota Disability Law Center, Elevate Teaching, and other community partners. These relationships expanded the support, mentorship, advocacy, and professional opportunities available to our scholars. Our recruitment activities in past years are proving successful, as the number of TOCAIT candidates in our program is increasing. We admitted 86 candidates to the licensure program in this reporting period, and 36 of those candidates are TOCAIT (41.86%).

Financial support remained one of the most important components of the program. More than 80 students received tuition assistance or help with other school-related expenses. This year, we saw an increase in both the number of students requesting support and the amount of assistance needed. In addition, more than 45 students received financial help related to significant life circumstances, including transportation challenges, food insecurity, housing instability, illness, mental health needs, and difficulties connected to the Metro Surge. For many students, timely and flexible assistance helped prevent a temporary crisis from disrupting their education or delaying their progress toward licensure.

Alongside financial support, Thrive provided ongoing personal and academic support to more than 95 teacher candidates of color. Monthly scholar gatherings created space for students to build relationships, discuss their experiences, and receive encouragement from peers, faculty, staff, and community members. Our speaker series also connected students with educators, advocates, and leaders whose experiences deepened their understanding of teaching, identity, equity, and service. These consistent opportunities for connection helped students feel seen and supported within the teacher preparation program.

Students, faculty members, and international partners repeatedly described the experience as “life changing.” The program also supported 4 students in developing a research poster and presenting at the international Coalition of Urban and Metropolitan Universities conference in Minneapolis. These experiences helped scholars see themselves not only as future teachers, but also as researchers, advocates, and contributors to the profession. The year concluded with the Thrive Graduation Stole Gala, which brought graduating and licensure-completing students together with faculty, staff, friends, and family members. Sharing a meal and recognizing

students' accomplishments provided a meaningful way to celebrate both individual achievement and the community that supported them.

Our experience this year reinforced several important lessons. Students benefit most when financial assistance is timely, flexible, and paired with sustained mentoring and a strong sense of community. Culturally affirming experiences, professional opportunities, and trusted partnerships also play an important role in helping students persist. To guide future improvements, we conducted a program evaluation examining Thrive program's effectiveness and efficiency. The findings, together with student feedback, will help us strengthen our practices and respond more effectively to the changing needs of teacher candidates.

Bemidji State University — Awarded $357,350.50 in FY24

During the period July 1, 2025, through June 30, 2026, Bemidji State University continued implementation of its ETAP initiative with a focus on recruiting, retaining, and supporting teacher candidates who are Indigenous and/or persons of color. Grant funds were used to provide direct financial support to eligible candidates, reducing financial barriers that often impede progress toward licensure. During this reporting period, approximately $77,931 was distributed directly to 21 teacher candidates, providing critical assistance as students completed coursework, participated in clinical experiences, and advanced toward program completion and licensure. Additional grant resources supported advising, outreach, and administrative coordination necessary to identify, recruit, and retain participants.

Recruitment efforts built upon relationships established with regional partners, including tribal colleges, community colleges, school districts, and organizations committed to diversifying Minnesota's educator workforce. Bemidji State University continued these collaborations to strengthen pathways into teacher preparation programs, with particular attention to place-bound and nontraditional students. The work initiated through partnerships with Minnesota North, Leech Lake Tribal College, and the GroundUP Coalition informed ongoing efforts to create accessible pathways for paraprofessionals and other aspiring educators already serving in schools and communities. We successfully completed year 1 of our field-based elementary education program with 15 candidates, and in summer 2026, we began cohort 2 with nearly 45 candidates. More than half of the candidates in the field-based program are diverse, place-based candidates.

Retention and candidate support remained central priorities throughout the year. Eligible candidates received proactive communication, just-in-time advising, and referrals to campus and community resources as needed. Faculty and staff and community partners worked collaboratively to address academic, financial, and personal barriers that could affect persistence in teacher preparation programs. Direct financial assistance, combined with individualized support, continued to be one of the program's most effective practices, enabling candidates to remain focused on coursework and licensure requirements. Previous participant feedback indicated that financial support reduced employment pressures and helped address immediate needs such as transportation, childcare, and technology-related expenses, lessons that continued to inform program implementation.

Key accomplishments during the reporting period included sustained investment in candidate support, continued strengthening of regional partnerships, and ongoing development of educator preparation pathways designed to expand opportunities for Indigenous candidates and candidates of color. We are currently developing a field-based ABS SPED program that we hope to get approval for and launch for fall 2027.

Additionally, we are partnering with Teacher Apprenticeship Minnesota and the Department of Labor and Industry (DLI) to develop a Dakota/Ojibwe language and culture pathway in partnership with tribal community representation and leadership. A key lesson learned has been the importance of early identification of candidate needs and the value of combining financial assistance with advising and relationship-based support. Together, these strategies have strengthened the university's capacity to recruit, retain, and support a more diverse educator workforce for Minnesota.

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

Building Community for Teacher Candidates of Color: We accepted 21 students into the cohort of Teacher Leaders of Color (TLOC) during the 2025-26 academic year.

Mentorship: This year we began offering our ETAP recipients the choice of whether or not to be paired with a mentor for the academic year. This offered students more flexibility in terms of how they want to engage in community building and professional development.

Scholarships (Direct Support): We offered direct support scholarships to all 21 members of the Teacher Leaders cohort. This financial assistance has been instrumental in alleviating some of the economic barriers and allowing them to focus more on their studies and professional development.

Community Building: In order to foster a strong and supportive community, we organized a variety of professional development and social gatherings for students.

Fall Welcome Dinner: On October 6, 2025, we gathered for a shared meal to kick off the academic year.

Pathways to Leadership in Education Professional Presentation: On November 17, we hosted a panel of leaders of color who spoke about their experiences in leadership in Minnesota schools.

Individual Advising: In November, we checked on the academic progress of our TLOC students.

TLOC Check-In: On March 30, we held a social session with our TLOC students on campus.

Spring Dinner: On April 21 students, mentors and faculty gathered for a meal and games.

ETAP Collaboration: In spring 2026, Allison Spenader engaged in dialogue with Stephanie DeVos at Southwest Minnesota State University to share our ideas and experiences around ETAP.

Successes and Challenges: We notice a strong sense of community developing among our cohort. Our students find a stronger sense of belonging from participating in community events and professional development opportunities. The scholarships provide welcome support to our candidates. Working with a local mentor/teacher of color is something most of our Teacher Leaders report as highly beneficial.

We have found that offering a mix of social events (community building with games and snacks, dinners) and professional development events works well for our Teacher Leaders.

Working with our alumni network proved to be very helpful this past year. Teacher Leaders cohort members took advantage of the opportunity to engage with these educational leaders, and the leaders reported back to us how impressed they were by our students.

Some students reported not having time to meet with their mentors, so this year we asked students to opt-in to mentorship.

Lessons Learned and Future Efforts: We plan to continue offering community building events, professional development, mentorship and scholarships.

For the next academic year, we will:

- Work to recruit more incoming students to the TLOC program;
- Offer direct support to our TLOC students;
- Pair interested students with local mentor teachers;
- Offer professional development workshops to our TLOC students;
- Offer community building opportunities including dinners, and check-ins with games, snacks and general advising to our cohort members.

Concordia College, Moorhead — Awarded $179,722.13 in FY26

Concordia College was unable to use the ETAP grant funds until we had finished using our CUGMEC funds, which we did spend completely through Spring 2026. However, between January 2026 and May 2026, we recruited prospective Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) students to our Master of Education programs who were interested in a Master's plus teaching licensure, knowing that we would use the ETAP funds for direct assistance during summer 2026 as they would enter the program. We had a number of completers in May 2026 who finished up with the CUGMEC funding, but we also had some continuing students who were able to benefit from the ETAP funding beginning in May 2026, as well as new candidates.

In our M.Ed. in World Language Instruction, we welcomed our first Oromo licensure seeker, two Hmong licensure seekers, a Haitian immigrant seeking dual licensure in Spanish and French, and two Somali/Arabic dual licensure seekers. In that program, we also had three Hmong licensure seekers continuing in summer 2026 with their second year of coursework. In our M.Ed. in Teaching and Learning, we recruited one Somali American teacher seeking math licensure; he is currently on a Tier 2 in a school serving predominantly Somali students and families. We continued to support one Black student seeking business education licensure and one Asian student seeking life science licensure. In the M.Ed. in Health and Physical Education program, we welcomed one Black student and one American Indian student seeking both health and physical education licensure. We also continued to support two Black students, one American Indian, and one Hmong student seeking both licensure areas.

Because we are using the ETAP funds for direct assistance, knowing that tuition is the biggest barrier to licensure, our activities are straightforward. We advise the students carefully to keep them on track for licensure, and they are already in cohorts where they receive a great deal of support from classmates and professors. ETAP direct assistance provides much needed relief for the students and makes it possible for them to continue. For one student, for example, he was initially working two jobs, struggling to juggle the graduate

coursework for licensure on top of it. Receiving the ETAP assistance allowed him to quit one of his jobs so that he can be successful in the program and reach his goals. Direct assistance is the most impactful way we have been able to use the ETAP funds.

Concordia University-St. Paul — Awarded $382,349.03 in FY26

Recruitment initiatives during this grant period focused on broadening community reach and highlighting available credentialing pathways:

- Targeted Outreach and Open Houses: Admissions and teacher preparation provider leaders engaged local school districts, community colleges, and public and private high schools. Open houses with several high schools were held to introduce teacher preparation pathways, including a session at a high school with approximately 80 percent students of color.
- Visual Marketing and Pathway Materials: Custom recruitment visuals were developed to clearly map out degree options and the licensure/endorsement areas across PreK-12 education.
- Expanding Partnerships: Preliminary discussions were initiated with external partners focused on cultivating teachers of color, alongside deepening relationships with local partner schools.
- Expanding online offerings: The university launched a new online undergraduate offering to support accessibility to prospective students who may otherwise be unable to pursue a teacher preparation program, with additional emphasis on accessibility for prospective students of color.

Student Retention and Support Practices: The program provided holistic scaffolding to help candidates navigate financial, academic, and personal responsibilities.

- Financial Support: The primary barrier for Concordia St. Paul (CSP) teacher preparation candidates is financial; the ETAP funding provides funds to support their progression in the program.
- Direct Support and Mentoring: To support persistence, candidates were provided with one-on-one professional mentoring.
- Operational Barrier Removal: To streamline the candidate experience, operational processes were assessed and updated to eliminate administrative hurdles, specifically simplifying admission to the teacher preparation program and streamlining student teaching registration.
- Curriculum and Instruction: The department of undergraduate teacher education focused efforts on reducing costs via open educational resources, enhanced online delivery of curriculum, and effective instruction.
- Evaluation of Support Models: Operational evaluation led to the sunsetting of the previous circles of support structure after determining they were not achieving desired outcomes.

Key Accomplishments, Effective Practices, Lessons Learned and Future Directions:

- Key Accomplishments/Effective Practices: 1. Implementation of a professional mentor model and plans to expand mentorship to include teachers currently in practice and affinity groups based on discipline to further support this work. 2. Launch of an online undergraduate teacher preparation program to reach even more students of color and Indigenous students. 3. Operational barriers were analyzed and removed to further support students of color and Indigenous students in their program progression.
- Effective Practices and Lessons Learned: 1. Student mentorship is an important way to build relationships and navigate individual situations that can impact academic performance and life issues. 2. Communication methods to reach students continue to evolve; we continue to investigate meaningful

ways to communicate with students that will meet their needs. 3. We focused on casting a wide net and providing a variety of delivery options for prospective and current students. Our delivery options benefited current students and provided more pathway options for prospective students. 4. Financial need is the largest barrier that CSP students encounter.

Hamline University — Awarded $421,875 in FY26

Hamline's ETAP Program includes three pillars: 1. direct financial tuition support, 2. a robust mentorship program, and 3. academic and social-emotional support, including the formation of affinity groups.

All three pillars of the program were in place to support our TOCAIT candidates in FY26.

1. Tuition assistance was disbursed to all eligible TOCAIT candidates enrolled in Hamline's School of Education and Leadership. Students interviewed for this report shared they appreciated the financial support they received through the grant, and one student shared that the financial assistance, in addition to the wraparound supports described below, were critical to their success in their first year at Hamline.
2. Individual mentors were engaged to directly support TOCAIT candidates throughout the academic year. In addition to external mentors, students received direct support and advising from former Center for Excellence in Urban Teaching (CEUT) Director, Dr. Rebecca Neal. One student interviewed for this report noted they participated in regular advising check-ins with Dr. Neal, which included direct academic support, social-emotional support, and opportunities for collaborative reflective journaling.
3. Affinity group meetings were held in the fall, winter, and spring to support community building and develop systems for mutual support among candidates. Another student interviewed for this report shared that the CEUT space is ideal for focused academic work, and that it was designed to offer both occasional tutoring assistance and a more independent quiet study space.

Metro State University — Awarded $1,778,128.88 in FY26

Key Accomplishments

The vast majority (87%) of grant funds from our FY24 CUGMEC Grant, FY25 CUGMEC Grant and FY26 ETAP Grant were used in FY26 to provide direct financial support to a total of 265 TOCAIT candidates. Scholarships were based on the number of credits they were enrolled in each semester and their tuition and fees expenses. We stacked awards from different grants within fiscal year limits (i.e., up to $9,151) per candidate. In sum, we:

- Closed out our CUGMEC FY24 grant by providing scholarships to 21 TOCAIT candidates averaging $2,657.02 per candidate for a total of $55,797.40 awarded.
- Spent down most of our CUGMEC FY25 grant by providing scholarships to 250 TOCAIT candidates averaging $3,528.59 per candidate for a total of $882,147.50 awarded.
- Started awarding scholarships from our ETAP FY26 grant by providing scholarships to 143 TOCAIT candidates averaging $2,973.30 per candidate for a total of $425,181.64 awarded.

These scholarships served their purpose to recruit, retain, and support eligible teacher candidates and the grants are continuing to make a difference in the academic and personal lives of hundreds of TOCAIT candidates.

Effective Practices

Beyond awarding scholarships, it has been imperative to have our grant-funded Director of Recruitment, Retention and Induction and our grant-funded Program Admission Coordinator/Academic Advisor positions to provide supports to TOCAIT candidates. Approximately 13% of grant funds in FY26 were used for their salaries and fringe benefits. Together and in collaboration with other internal partners (e.g., university Admissions, Gateway Student Services, etc.) and external partners (e.g., Black Men Teach, community colleges, school districts), their recruitment and retention supports have boosted TOCAIT candidate enrollment and success.

Lessons Learned

It is a very complex process to make scholarship awards based on the number of credits enrolled each semester and factoring in multiple grants as well as other sources of financial aid and the timing of when awards are posted to students' accounts. The successful effort requires close collaboration with Financial Aid, Grants, and Accounts Receivable offices at the university.

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 $325,671.48 in FY26

Since receiving ETAP funding, The College of Education at Minnesota State University, Mankato has focused on reducing financial barriers for teacher candidates of color and American Indian candidates while strengthening the academic and mentoring supports available to them throughout their teacher preparation programs. The primary activity completed thus far was the distribution of scholarship funds. Nine eligible teacher candidates were awarded scholarships, providing direct financial support as they continue working toward program completion and teacher licensure. Alongside scholarship distribution, project PIs focused on developing and refining the MavTeach mentoring program in preparation for implementation in fall 2026. Because mentor-mentee partnerships had not yet begun during the reporting period, this work focused on building the structures needed to support meaningful and sustainable mentoring relationships.

The program aims to recruit five mentors and ten teacher candidate mentees for the upcoming mentoring cycle, creating a structure in which each mentor can work closely with approximately two candidates. Faculty and project personnel met monthly to plan mentor and mentee recruitment, orientation materials, communication procedures, program expectations, outreach strategies, and evaluation processes. These conversations also provided an opportunity to reflect on lessons learned from previous implementation efforts and identify ways to strengthen the mentoring experience for both mentors and teacher candidates. As part of this planning, the MavTeach mentoring model was further developed around structured monthly one-on-one meetings between mentors and mentees.

Project staff also designed a series of activities intended to support teacher candidates' professional growth and encourage ongoing reflection on their developing identities as educators. These activities include creating a teaching philosophy statement, a supportive learning environment plan, and a commitment to inclusion statement. Mentors and mentees will also complete a "get-to-know-you" agreement at the beginning of the program to establish shared expectations, communication preferences, individual goals, and approaches to building a productive mentoring relationship. These components provide a structure for the mentoring experience while allowing mentors to respond to the individual goals and needs of their mentees. Project staff also prepared for the fall launch of the mentoring program. A mentor orientation is scheduled for mid-September, followed by a meet-and-greet that will provide mentors and teacher candidates an opportunity to connect before regular mentoring activities begin. These initial activities are intended to establish clear expectations, support relationship building, and begin creating a sense of community among participants.

Planning also continued for the mathematics tutoring component identified in the ETAP proposal. Program staff discussed implementation procedures and processes for identifying teacher candidates who would benefit from additional academic support. Tutoring will begin after students in MATH 202 who may need additional support have been identified, allowing tutoring resources to be directed toward candidates with demonstrated academic needs. The tutoring session will begin on October 23, 2026, on the same day MATH 202 is held on MSU, Mankato's campus. The reporting period combined immediate financial support with significant preparation for expanded mentoring and academic support. The awarding of nine scholarships provided direct assistance to teacher candidates during the reporting period, while the development of MavTeach, including a recruitment goal of five mentors and ten mentees, established a stronger foundation for the upcoming mentoring cycle. Planning for mathematics tutoring further extends this work by addressing academic support alongside financial and relational needs. Our efforts reflect the broader goals of the ETAP project by creating multiple forms of support that can contribute to teacher candidate persistence, professional growth, and successful completion of licensure programs.

St. Catherine University — Awarded $83,937.60 in FY26

To adhere to fund-spending guidelines, the teacher preparation unit at St. Kate's fully expended remaining FY25 CUGMEC funds prior to drawing down FY26 ETAP funds. Accordingly, no ETAP FY26 funds were expended nor drawn down during the July 1, 2025 through June 30, 2026 reporting period. St. Catherine University will begin allocating ETAP FY26 funds starting July 1, 2026.

Effective Practices

The remaining FY25 CUGMEC funds focused on providing financial support to the currently enrolled Students of Color and American Indian Students (SOCAIS), while expanding the total number of SOCAIS enrolled in the teacher licensure programs at St. Kate's. St. Kate's utilizes internal awards, TEACH scholarships, and additional staff hours to support its students. The FY25 CUGMEC funds went directly to support students through scholarships. In addition, the education department committed resources to ongoing support and recruitment, enrollment, and retention efforts. These efforts continued through increased advising and mentorship support, flexible pathways to completion, and book and fee stipends. Candidates were able to remain working in their communities, which students noted in their surveys helped to give their own families stability and helped their

employers have a more sustained workforce, benefiting the children and families they serve. All of these grant funds and scholarships, along with the FY25 CUGMEC funds, helped to increase recruitment for the Early Childhood Education (ECE) and School Library Media Specialist (SLMS) licensure programs as well as support the retention toward graduation for both SLMS and ECE candidates.

Key accomplishments

- Expanded Direct Financial Support: Increased Students of Color and American Indian Students Affinity Group (SOCAIS) candidates enrolled and receiving scholarship support from 14 in school year 2024-25 to 20 in school year 2025-26.
- Mentor Recruitment: Successfully recruited two educators currently working in Metro Area schools to lead the SOCAIS Affinity Group.

Lessons Learned

The department learned lessons about the need for dynamic planning and flexibility during AY 2025-26. In early spring 2026, the local community impact of Metro Surge significantly affected our mentor educators working in metro-area schools, leading one mentor to step down to focus on her school community's immediate needs. The department adapted and recruited a new mentor in late Spring and collaborated with the mentors to adjust the implementation timeline. The Affinity Group start date was moved from spring 2026 to fall 2026, with mentors planning for the launch during the spring and summer of 2026. Looking ahead, we will continue to offer flexible mentor roles to educators so that they can engage in this work while also sustainably supporting their own students and school communities.

St. Cloud State University (SCSU) — Awarded $126,562.50 in FY26

The St. Cloud State University (SCSU) teacher preparation program effectively used our ETAP funds to recruit, retain, and support eligible teacher candidates. During the year, our most notable accomplishment was awarding $69,290 to 17 teacher candidates of color and American Indians enrolled at SCSU. The two most effective practices during the year were partnering with SCSU's American Indian Center to identify eligible candidates and promote/inform about available ETAP funds, and communicating with past Future Teacher Academy students (who are predominately students of color) enrolled at SCSU and are seeking and education degree/teaching licensure. Additionally, we informed this year's Future Teacher Academy students about the ETAP funds and the potential for other future ETAP grants that MDE may continue (recruitment). Another noteworthy practice used was streamlining/simplifying the application process through Microsoft Forms. By creating an easy-to-use application that takes on average 20 minutes to complete, we were able to more effectively promote ETAP dollars. Finally, there were two major lessons learned during the year. The first lesson is to keep, and share, the best possible records when it comes to eligible students (both current and incoming students). The second lesson is to be proactive when working with the financial aid and business offices to ensure that the funds get applied to students' accounts prior to NorthStar Promise dollars.

St. Mary's University — Awarded $112,050 FY26

From February 3, 2026, through June 30, 2026, Saint Mary's University of Minnesota used ETAP funding to strengthen the recruitment, retention, and support of eligible teacher candidates, with particular emphasis on expanding access to special education licensure for working paraprofessionals, provisionally licensed educators, and other school-based professionals. The FY26 grant supported both direct financial assistance and programmatic strategies intended to reduce financial, scheduling, and institutional barriers to licensure. These strategies aligned with the original grant design, which emphasized flexible workplace integration, asynchronous learning, individualized advising, mentorship, and targeted recruitment.

A key accomplishment during FY26 was continued growth in teacher preparation and, particularly, in the special education programs targeted by the grant. At the time of the FY26 application, the most recent available data identified 36 candidates accepted into teacher preparation programs, including 10 SOCAIS candidates (28%). By the Spring 2026 enrollment report, the teacher preparation unit included 177 degree-seeking candidates, including 33 reported SOCAIS candidates (19%). Within Special Education, enrollment had grown to 66 candidates, including 15 reported SOCAIS candidates (22.7%). During the FY26 reporting period, 13 eligible candidates received direct ETAP financial assistance. Because demographic reporting was incomplete and the Spring 2026 snapshot does not capture all subsequent enrollment, these figures represent the most complete verified institutional data available rather than a comprehensive count of all eligible candidates.

ETAP funds also supported intentional redesign of online coursework and candidate supports to improve accessibility and retention. Courses were structured for asynchronous participation and increasingly incorporated workplace-based assignments, allowing candidates to demonstrate licensure competencies through authentic activities within their existing school roles. This approach reduced unnecessary seat time and duplication between employment and university coursework while maintaining alignment with Minnesota licensure standards. Increased individualized academic and licensure advising supported candidates with registration, course sequencing, field experiences, financial resources, and licensure planning. Recruitment and outreach also focused on paraprofessionals, provisionally licensed teachers, and other school employees, while new and existing school and community partnerships helped establish sustainable pathways into teacher preparation. These activities were consistent with the programmatic supports identified in the original ETAP application.

Effective practices during FY26 demonstrated that financial assistance is most effective when paired with flexible program design and individualized support. Candidate feedback used in the original grant design emphasized asynchronous coursework, workplace integration, consistent advising, and mentorship, and implementation during FY26 reinforced the value of these approaches for candidates balancing employment, family, and academic responsibilities. The grant also demonstrated the importance of clear administrative processes for identifying eligible candidates, coordinating awards, and tracking financial assistance across university offices. Recruitment and outreach conducted during FY26 have continued to generate eligible candidates for subsequent award periods, and Saint Mary's is expanding ETAP outreach beyond Special Education to eligible candidates in additional teacher preparation pathways, including other degree programs. Moving forward, Saint Mary's will build on these lessons by continuing to pair direct financial assistance with accessible program structures, individualized advising, and targeted recruitment and partnerships to support candidate persistence and completion.

Southwest Minnesota University—Awarded $112,498.88 in FY26

During Fiscal Year 2026, the School of Education (SoE) at Southwest Minnesota State University continued to use ETAP grant funds to retain and support teacher candidates of color and Indigenous backgrounds. The SoE focused on providing direct financial support to eligible candidates to enhance persistence and success in teacher preparation programs. Scholarship funds helped reduce financial barriers that can impact retention and completion of teacher preparation programs. These scholarship investments supported student persistence, reduced financial stress, and encouraged candidates to remain on track toward teacher licensure.

ETAP grant funds were used to support a Graduate Assistant who maintained office hours and worked directly within the House of Education. This position increased access to mentoring, advising, academic support, and resources, allowing for more frequent and meaningful interactions with teacher candidates. The Graduate Assistant maintained a consistent presence within the candidates through mentoring, informal check-ins, and programming designed to support academic success, social interactions, and professional growth. The House of Education provided a dedicated residential environment where students could connect with peers with similar academic and professional goals.

Several effective practices emerged during the reporting period. First, the combination of scholarship support and targeted relationship-building helped strengthen retention efforts. Second, the House of Education demonstrated the importance of creating intentional spaces where teacher candidates can build community, access support, and develop a stronger connection to the teaching profession. Lessons learned throughout FY2026 reinforced the importance of addressing both financial and social factors that influence candidate success. While scholarship assistance remains a critical component of retention, students also benefit significantly from opportunities to connect with peers, faculty, and mentors. The School of Education found that combining financial support with proactive advising, community-building activities, and accessible faculty engagement creates a more comprehensive support system for teacher candidates.

Overall, ETAP funding enabled Southwest Minnesota State University to continue expanding pathways into the teaching profession for candidates of color and Indigenous backgrounds while supporting their persistence and progress toward licensure. The School of Education remains committed to sustaining and refining these efforts to increase the diversity of Minnesota's teacher workforce and ensure that teacher candidates receive the resources and support needed to succeed.

University of Minesota, Duluth (UMD) — Awarded $83,400 in FY25

In FY25, UMD changed its approach by using ETAP (previously CUGMEC) funds for only direct awards. In FY26 we built on the success of this approach by continuing to use the grant funds to provide direct support to TOCAIT candidates who are enrolled in our teacher licensure programs. After discussion with faculty and staff supporting this program, we decided to offer larger award amounts to TOCAIT candidates who were in their student teaching semesters, rather than offering smaller scholarships to more candidates in different stages in the programs. Feedback from candidates across all licensure programs indicated that the student teaching semester(s) is often the most difficult, because teacher candidates must essentially work full-time without pay at their school placements while also paying tuition. As described in the Student Teaching Stipend Pilot Project Report written by PELSB in June 2025, direct financial support during student teaching can "significantly

reducing stress and enabling them to focus on their teaching responsibilities." (page 12-13) A total of nine students who were student teaching in several different programs (Integrated Elementary and Special Education, Developmental/Adapted Physical Education (DAPE) K-12, Teaching Social Studies and Teaching Mathematics) were supported through scholarships awarded from this fund during the fall semester of 2025. These candidates were selected based on unmet financial need, in order to provide funding for the students who needed it the most. Each of the nine student teachers selected for the award received $2550, except for one who received $2500 to avoid exceeding the cost of attendance.

All of the student teachers who were awarded CUGMEC/ETAP funding were able to complete their student teaching semesters and received Tier 3 licensure at the completion of their programs. The ETAP funding was a successful way to provide additional support for students with unmet need through financial aid. Our programs also incorporate antiracist and culturally sustaining pedagogies into our introductory, diversity, and methods coursework, to help strengthen the knowledge, skills, and empathy of our teacher candidates toward minoritized students and colleagues in the program. Our faculty are in the process of explicitly incorporating the Standards of Effective Practice (SEPs) that include explicit connections to culturally responsive and sustaining teaching throughout each of our programs. The structure of these changes is grounded in feedback from our TOCAIT alumni, who spoke in a focus group with faculty in 2022-23 about their experience in teacher education programs. The intent of curricular changes is to support retention of our TOCAIT candidates by providing opportunities for majority students at a PWI to consider how they can make UMD a place that is safe and welcoming. The numbers of TOCAIT candidates in teacher licensure programs have increased.

In September, after consulting with the UMD Office of General Council regarding applying for another ETAP grant, we were advised that the University of Minnesota scholarship disbursement language, adopted after the Supreme Court of the United States (SCOTUS) decision striking down affirmative action in 2023, includes a statement that "*Race, gender, and other protected identities cannot be considered, even as a plus-factor, in distributing scholarships."* Based on this guidance, UMD did not apply for the next round of ETAP funding and did not disburse ETAP funding to students in Spring semester of 2026.

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

Key Accomplishments

The primary goal of the University of Minnesota, Morris — a solely undergraduate institution — in procuring and distributing ETAP funding is to support BIPOC students through to degree completion. Of 17 elementary and secondary education seniors, six (35%) were teacher candidates of color. All six completed degrees in their chosen fields and graduated. Five received their teaching licenses, with one candidate planning to return to complete student teaching, as a family emergency prevented them from finishing that experience in spring 2026. Black and indigenous students and students of color are retained at far lower rates, typically, than are white students, so we see this as an excellent result. In addition to graduating teacher candidates, the ETAP funding aided in retaining Teachers of Color and American Indian Teachers (TOCAIT) in the pipeline, having awarded 13 students over $32,000.

Another key accomplishment for UMN Morris was the ability to completely spend down our first ETAP (CUGMEC) grant and begin spending the second award. We only recently began applying for and receiving

CUGMEC/ETAP funding and were very tentative at first about communicating with candidates about the opportunity and even awarding funds, as we wanted to be good stewards of the funding provided. That slow start caused us to take longer than expected to utilize the grant and therefore we do consider it an accomplishment to have awarded the funds and be able to continue to do so with our FY25 and FY27 awards.

Finally, our ETAP funds have supported recruitment and retention efforts. We implemented future educator visit days on our campus, particularly connecting with schools with high populations of students of color. Students from 5 high schools, including a tribal school partner, attended our spring 2026 event. Our Education Minnesota Aspiring Educators program has been consistent in offering activities and events to support future educators. We are currently reflecting on how to organize affinity groups to specifically target TOCAIT, as our small size has limited these efforts in the past.

Effective Practices

As just mentioned, utilizing already existing structures and organizations, such as Education Minnesota Aspiring Educators, has proven to be more effective for us (so far) than establishing new specialized groups. The other practice that has boosted participation in the program is our investment of effort in utilizing our data and reporting center to generate rosters of candidates and proactively communicate with them about available opportunities. Finally, pairing this outreach to candidates with proactive communications and announcements to academic advisors across campus has helped raise awareness.

Lessons Learned

We are gradually learning how things work best at our specific institution. After trying for two years, we realized that our initial plan of hiring a student as a peer mentor/peer ambassador was not working for us. Candidates did not use the office hours and other resources and, more importantly, it was difficult to find a peer who had the capacity to take on this work, since the most equipped peer mentors are seniors in our programs who have the experience to help younger candidates navigate the experience. Seniors are incredibly busy with completing their own licensure programs and thus it was difficult to staff this position. We are now considering how we can get alumni or other external partners involved in supporting our TOCAIT candidates.

Educators have known for a long time that pedagogies which support students with disabilities support the learning of all students. This lesson applies to TOCAIT as well. Our practices and curriculum implemented to support our BIPOC teacher candidates result in greater learning for our non-BIPOC candidates as well. Therefore, we continue to implement such elements throughout our programs. This is also coherent with our program conceptual framework, which centered working toward change and justice and indigenizing teaching and teacher preparation.

Finally, a difficult lesson learned is that in our rural location transportation remains an issue and yet as an undergraduate-only institution there are limits on what/how much funding can be provided to candidates to mitigate this challenge and the institution does not have resources designed for this specific type of support. So, we are challenged to continue to think through this. An additional “difficult lesson” is that though our support has grown, there are still limits on how we can support our non-traditional students who are trying to go to school full time, obtain their teaching licensure, and support a family while not being able to do paid work (or not much of it) and having their financial aid top out at a certain point, even though these folks are not in the

same situation as traditional undergraduates. This is inspiring challenging — but hopefully fruitful — conversations with university leadership, financial aid, and other units.

University of Minesota, Twin Cities (UMTC) — Awarded $383,230.58 in FY26

Program Overview and Scope

During the 2025-26 academic period, the teacher preparation unit at the UMTC, housed within the College of Education and Human Development (CEHD), utilized FY25 CUGMEC and FY26 ETAP funds to recruit, retain, and support eligible teacher candidates. CEHD oversees 16 PELSB-approved initial licensure content areas spanning early childhood, elementary, secondary academic subjects, special education, and world languages (including heritage-speaker pathways in Hmong, Karen, and Spanish). This strategy directly advances PELSB Unit Rule Subpart 4, Standard 16, which requires effective institutional practices to recruit, retain, and increase candidates of color and Indigenous candidates in the educator pipeline.

Key Accomplishments and Direct Student Support

By leveraging combined state grant streams during the 2025-26 reporting period, UMN-TC provided direct tuition scholarships of up to $5,000 to 80 eligible teacher candidates, directly addressing the significant demand among the 130+ students identified with demonstrated financial need. Because most UMN-TC initial licensure programs are post-baccalaureate graduate degrees, tuition costs represent a primary obstacle for candidates who are often working adults balancing family obligations, housing expenses, or existing educational debt. Direct scholarship support alleviated critical financial strain during intense coursework and clinical placements. As a result, these supported candidates maintained strong progress toward Tier 3 licensure, maintaining the unit's high-performance metrics of a 92% licensure recommendation rate (FY25 data).

Effective Practices

Day-to-day grant administration was led by Laura Mogelson, Director of the Multiple Pathways Office, in close coordination with the Office of Teacher Education (OTE) and the Office of Student Finance. This centralized structure ensured all scholarship awards remained within candidates' allowable Cost of Attendance (COA) limits while maintaining a simplified application process. Staff provided coordinated outreach, electronic award notifications, and ongoing progress monitoring to help candidates stay enrolled and hit key licensure benchmarks. To proactively mitigate entry barriers, information regarding scholarship opportunities was widely disseminated through targeted outreach events and the central OTE web portal (cehd.umn.edu/teaching/scholarships).

Lessons Learned

A primary lesson learned during the grant period is that confirming tuition relief prior to the start of clinical field experiences significantly lowers student stress, preventing candidates from reducing course loads or taking leaves of absence due to financial strain. Furthermore, feedback gathered during advising sessions and program surveys confirmed that direct tuition assistance, especially when paired with a simple, accessible application process, serves as an effective lever for candidate retention.

University of St. Thomas — Awarded $326,183.63 in FY26

Key Accomplishments

The biggest success of this grant is the number of students who received meaningful financial support during the past year. Sixty students received up to the maximum scholarship amount allowed through the grant. These scholarships directly reduced financial barriers for candidates pursuing teacher licensure and helped them continue their preparation. The outcomes for scholarship recipients have been strong. Of the 60 students receiving funding, 33 have completed their teacher preparation program; 25 remain enrolled and are continuing in their programs, and only two students withdrew. Of the 33 students who completed their programs, 29 have obtained their teaching license and 4 are in the process of completing their licensure requirements. Overall, 58 of the 60 scholarship recipients (97%) either completed their program or remain actively enrolled, demonstrating the value of financial support in helping candidates persist toward the teaching profession.

The grant also expands several strengths of our teacher preparation programs. We have dedicated staff who are knowledgeable about the community and well connected to local schools and districts, allowing us to effectively recruit individuals who are already working in schools and are interested in becoming teachers. Our established district partnerships also support candidates during preparation and after graduation through recruitment, induction, and data collection. This combination of financial support, strong relationships, and accessible pathways is an important part of our success.

Effective Practices

One of our most effective practices is our long-standing partnership with Saint Paul Public Schools (SPPS), Minneapolis Public Schools (MPS), and at least a dozen charter schools. Through these partnerships, district leaders and staff help us reach the goals of the ETAP grant by identifying and recruiting dedicated, non-licensed school staff who are interested in becoming teachers. Our partners also help us identify opportunities for induction support, provide access to data, and participate in program evaluation.

Another effective practice is the consistency and continuity of our staff. Ea Porter has a long-standing commitment to the goals of ETAP and has served as a community liaison, partner, and recruiter for the University of St. Thomas. This continuity allows us to maintain trusted relationships with school districts and community partners and provides a consistent presence for prospective teacher candidates. Some of the community partners who are education-focused but not district specific are: Breakthrough Twin Cities, Generation Next, Elevate Teaching, and Educators Rising. These relationships have developed over many years and are an important asset to the program. We continue building these effective practices by expanding ETAP support to undergraduate pathways. In the upcoming year, we plan to use our newest ETAP grant to support eligible undergraduate students in our new Associate of Arts (AA) to Bachelor of Arts (BA) pathway. This expansion will allow us to reach prospective teachers earlier in their preparation while continuing to use the partnerships and recruitment strategies that have been successful in our graduate programs.

Lessons Learned

One important lesson has been the need to remain responsive to the changing legal and policy environment surrounding scholarships and higher education. We continue to navigate the impact of SFFA v. Harvard and

increased scrutiny of race-conscious decision-making. In response, we have worked with our general counsel office to ensure scholarship practices are following current federal requirements and ETAP requirements.

We have also learned that financial support is most effective when it is combined with strong relationships and accessible pathways. Scholarships can reduce a significant financial barrier, but candidates also benefit from trusted relationships with faculty, staff, school districts, and community partners as they navigate teacher preparation. The cohort model, regular advising, and other wrap-around activities provide additional support to the candidates. The combination of financial assistance and ongoing support helps candidates persist toward licensure.

Finally, we have learned the value of building on established partnerships rather than creating new structures for each grant. Our long-standing relationships with districts and community partners provide a foundation that allows grant funds to be implemented efficiently and reach candidates who are already connected to schools and communities. These relationships also provide a strong foundation as we expand support to undergraduate pathways.