



TRANSFORMATIONAL PARTNERSHIPS FUND

Higherpartnerships.org
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The Transformational Partnerships Fund

- Established by SeaChange and the ECMC Foundation with additional support from Ascendium Education Group, The Kresge Foundation, and the Michael & Susan Dell Foundation.
- Supports colleges and universities interested in exploring partnerships that could fundamentally improve how they operate and serve students — especially students of color, students from low-income families, and other underserved populations.
- Partnerships include: shared services, joint academic offerings; full or partial mergers; preferred and well-funded teachouts.
- TPF provides a safe space for discussion and deliberation, referrals, and grants of up to \$100,000.

The view after one year

- Growing recognition of the role of partnerships as a proactive strategy for growth or as a wise response to the environment and an efficient form of strategic planning and capacity building.
- 60+ inquiries, 8 grants of which 7 involve private colleges of under 2,500 students.
- Range of partnerships – It's not all about mergers.
- The importance of a safe space early in the process.
- TPF grants can help motivate action and generate enthusiasm.

The view after one year (con't)

- Degree of difficult is very high given multiple stakeholders (students, alums, faculty, administration, trustees, community, regulators), their level of commitment/passion, the long gestation period. (See [The Unmaking of a College](#)), and ethical issues
- Success factors: start early, focus on mission/students, trust and coordination between trustees and president; thoughtful use of advisers; and communications.
- Four basic strategies
 - Engage selectively (including “start small”)
 - Boil the Ocean
 - Send a smoke Signal
 - Change horses

Reasons for Optimism

- The response to COVID showed more institutional nimbleness than critics expected.
- The ordeal of COVID has likely improved governance and leadership for many institutions.
- Help is increasingly available to even smaller institutions.
- As the number of partnerships grows, the exploration process will be increasing normalized and institutions can learn from their peers.