

Inside Philanthropy

Keck Tries Something New with its STEM Funding: Teacher Training

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The name “Keck” is practically synonymous with STEM education when you consider all of the money the W.M. Keck Foundation has poured into this cause. But these efforts have largely focused on institutions and students at the undergraduate level of college, especially programs related to research.

But now, the Keck Foundation has taken a new turn with its STEM education funding, and it plays into a trend that we’ve been tracking lately at IP. Teacher training was a big deal to funders across the country in 2015, and that trend shows no signs of slowing down this year. Extensive and ongoing training becomes even more important in complex and ever-changing fields like math, science, technology, and engineering, so the need for STEM teacher training is perhaps greater than in other fields.

Keck just announced a \$250,000 grant to EnCorps Stem Teachers L.A., a group that plans to recruit and train 138 new STEM professionals and military veterans to become STEM teachers by 2018. The target demographic of this STEM education is middle school and high school students in Los Angeles, and EnCorps’ goal is to reach over 17,000 of them with these new teacher training efforts by 2019.

“Every new EnCorps STEM teacher will impact 125 students per year in underserved communities, demonstrating the real-world application of math and science and how it is essential to their future,” explained Katherine Wilcox, EnCorps’ executive director, in a press release.

Los Angeles is already being served by EnCorps, but this new grant commitment will enable it to deepen and expand its impact. Around one quarter of California’s public schools are in Los Angeles, so there’s still plenty of opportunity here. Other

areas served by the nonprofit are the San Francisco Bay Area, Sacramento, Orange County, and San Diego County.

However, one thing has remained consistent with Keck's STEM support: a geographic focus on the Los Angeles area. For years now, the foundation has put a priority on its own home city in terms of STEM support and really homed in on the African American, Latino, and Native American populations. This aligns quite nicely with EnCorps' dedication to bridging STEM gaps for low-income and minority students.

In Los Angeles, Keck tends to broaden its view of who needs STEM education the most and extend grants to even the youngest of students. On the flip side, higher education STEM grants have consistently stayed focused on research efforts but have a national reach.

Yet Keck does still have its grant-making program solely dedicated to Southern California. These grants span from \$100,000 to \$1 million. Keck's local program is fairly broad and funds lots of causes that promote the education and healthy development of youth and families. This can be anything from arts & culture to early childhood education, pre-collegiate education, or healthcare.