



OCTOBER 2018

ONE MILLION DEGREES

ORGANIZATIONAL ASSESSMENT

Overview

ABOUT

One Million Degrees accelerates community college students' progress on career pathways to economic mobility by providing academic, professional, personal, and financial supports to highly motivated, low-income students pursuing associate's degrees or post-secondary certificates.

WHY WE INVESTED

One Million Degrees (OMD) is enabling low-income community college students to earn their degrees at three times the typical rate in Chicago. The City Colleges of Chicago serve more than 80,000 students annually. Unfortunately, only 18 percent of students will earn an associate's degree or certificate within three years. In contrast, 58 percent of OMD's most recent cohort earned an associate's degree or certificate within three years of starting with OMD. One Million Degrees is showing what is possible when talented students are matched with compelling supports. OMD is poised for long-term success with a compelling leadership team, strong civic support, and a track record of effectively scaling.



GRANTEE SINCE

2013

INVESTMENT TO DATE

\$2.62M

CURRENT NUMBER SERVED

805

LEADERSHIP

Paige Ponder

Chief Executive Officer

Our Assessment



PROGRAM

By 2020, 70 percent of all jobs in Illinois will require some postsecondary education, of which 47 percent will require at least an associate's degree. The demand for middle-skill jobs is growing, yet there is a shortage of workers for these positions. Serving tens of thousands of students each year, the City Colleges of Chicago is a natural talent pipeline to fill this gap, but only 18 percent of students earn an associate's degree or certificate within three years. One Million Degrees (OMD) is dramatically changing those odds. Most recent data shows that 58 percent of students entering OMD earned an associate's degree or certificate within three years of starting with the program. These results demonstrate the fidelity of OMD's model by staying strong during a period of significant growth. OMD is committed to continuous improvement and is engaged in an evaluation with the University of Chicago Urban Labs. Early results show increased outcomes for OMD students along two predictors of degree attainment: persistence and full-time enrollment.



LEADERSHIP

Paige Ponder has led One Million Degrees (OMD) since 2012 and continues to bring strong leadership to the organization. Ponder is supported by a highly effective management team. Ponder and her team have been successful at gaining traction externally, strengthening partnerships with the City Colleges of Chicago (CCC), taking advantage of new opportunities—such as partnering with Aon to support Aon's apprentices—and driving year-over-year growth. In addition to an effective management team, OMD has a highly engaged and effective board. The board is comprised of 17 members and accounted for 20 percent of OMD's successful three-year, \$10M fundraising campaign. OMD's board is led by a highly effective board chair and OMD co-founder, David Scherer. Furthermore, Ponder and her team have done a compelling job at building a relationship with the Chancellor of City Colleges, Juan Salgado. Not only is this support important in operating the current program, but it is starting conversations about ways in which OMD and CCC can partner even more intensively over the coming years to support the success of more students.

Our Assessment



OPERATIONS

One Million Degrees (OMD) has a strong track record of growing and meeting its fundraising targets. OMD has had compelling revenue growth to date, nearly tripling revenue from \$1.5M in 2014 to \$4.4M in 2018, and it will be working to sustain that level of giving after the recent conclusion of its three-year, \$10M capital campaign. In 2019, the organization is planning to hold steady on fundraising while it operationalizes its strategic plan and considers growth opportunities that could unlock additional sources of revenue. OMD has increased its operating efficiency over time, enabling each dollar raised to have an even greater impact on students. OMD's cost per scholar has declined by nearly 50 percent since 2015 while results have remained strong. As OMD has increased its staff size significantly, from 23 in 2016 to 31 in 2018, it has experienced challenges with culture, and it leveraged outside help to work on these issues. In September of 2018, some of OMD's staff voted to unionize, and OMD will be working through the associated adjustments to this new context over the coming year.



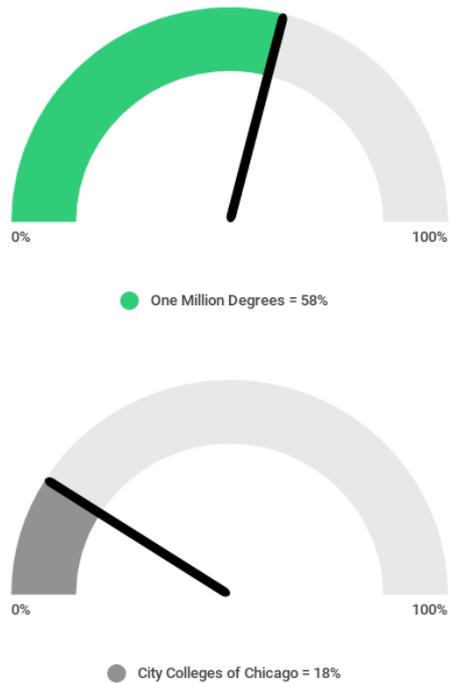
SCALE

While One Million Degrees (OMD) has steadily scaled its program to serve more students, growth has been slower than originally projected. OMD has grown from serving 130 students in 2014 to over 800 students in its signature program in 2018. In the year ahead, OMD expects to serve 750 scholars in its signature program, a slight decrease from the year prior, and 100 in its apprenticeship program, double the number from the year prior. OMD believes that it is close to reaching maximum market penetration for the students it aspires to serve under its signature model, having continued to ramp up recruitment efforts over the last few years. OMD is seeking to further expand its impact by considering its role outside of its direct service model. For example, in 2018 OMD developed a proposal to work with CCC to train its counsellors on select campuses in OMD's model and approach, thereby supporting CCC's efforts to improve student outcomes. While that specific effort is on hold, it illustrates new lines of work OMD is contemplating as part of its strategic plan in the coming year to ultimately support more students towards long-term success.

Grantee Performance

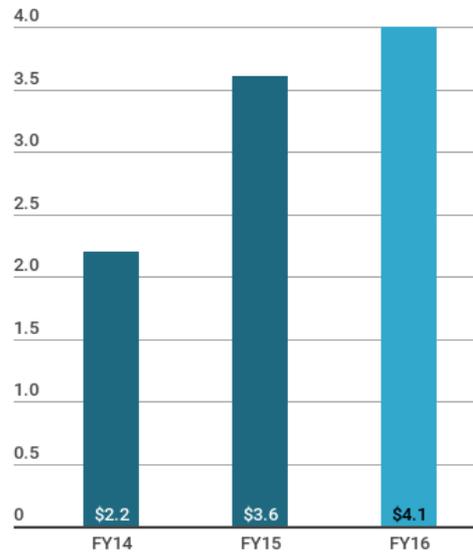
KEY OUTCOME

Community college graduation rate



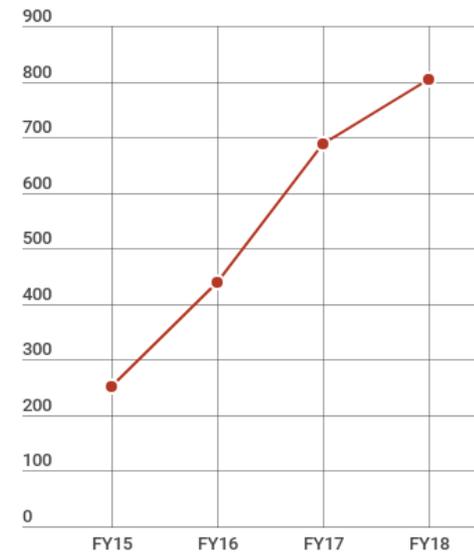
REVENUE

In millions



SCALE

Students served

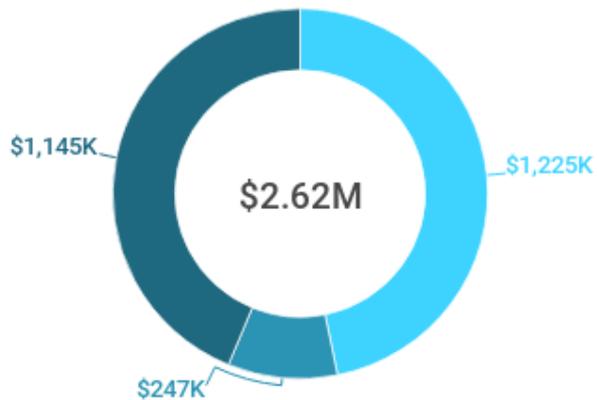


Note: City Colleges of Chicago graduation rate represents the percentage of first-time, full-time students who graduate with an associate's degree or certificate within 150 percent of normal time.

Sources: One Million Degrees; One Million Degrees financial statements; City colleges of Chicago

Our Impact

INVESTMENT TO DATE



● Monetary grants ● Management support ● Pro-bono support

MANAGEMENT SUPPORT HIGHLIGHTS

Evaluation: One Million Degrees is partnering with the University of Chicago's Urban Labs to complete a randomized control trial. This multi-year research study launched in 2017. A Better Chicago helped with the planning process and secured the funding for the study.

Strategic Planning: One Million Degrees worked with a consulting firm to develop its most recent long-term strategic plan and identify and prioritize future opportunities for growth. A Better Chicago helped scope the project and covered 50 percent of the fees.

Leadership Development: One Million Degrees' leadership team is participating in Leading for Impact®, a cohort-driven leadership development program run by the Bridgespan group. A Better Chicago is covering 50 percent of the fees.

Contact Us

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