

2021 ANNUAL REPORT

# PIONEERING PATHWAYS FOR CTE

Next-Level Solutions for Career & Technical Education

## CONTENTS

### 2 OVERVIEW

### 4 IMPACT REPORT

### 6 PROGRESS AT OUR SCHOOLS

### 8 BLENDED LEARNING

### 10 STUDENT SUCCESS

### 12 VALUES IN ACTION

### 14 KEY INVESTMENTS

### 16 PROGRESS WITH EMPLOYER TRAINING

### 18 LOOKING AHEAD

### 20 THOUGHT LEADERSHIP

### 22 OUTREACH

### 24 ABOUT ECMC GROUP COMPANIES

## OUR MISSION

Transforming career and technical education to provide aspiring and current learners with skills to elevate their careers and communities.

## ECMC GROUP VISION

Empowering underserved communities to thrive through education.

## ABOUT ECMC EDUCATION

ECMC Education is a nonprofit provider of educational solutions rooted in innovation, employer collaboration and industry stewardship to generate superior learner outcomes. The organization operates Altierus Career College—a network of career and technical schools delivering allied health and skilled trades programs—and offers a range of direct-to-employer training solutions through Altierus Training Solutions. By pioneering a robust, technology-enabled educational model that holistically serves learners and connects them to in-demand careers with strong earning potential, ECMC Education seeks to lead the way forward in career and technical education (CTE).

ECMC Education is headquartered in Minneapolis, Minnesota, and has campus locations in Houston, Texas; Atlanta, Georgia; and Tampa, Florida.

## LEARN MORE

Visit [www.ecmceducation.org](http://www.ecmceducation.org), [www.altierus.edu](http://www.altierus.edu) and [www.altierustraining.org](http://www.altierustraining.org).

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Accelerated by the pandemic, a reset of expectations is underway for how to best deliver education models that generate strong outcomes for all students and learners. Particularly among teenagers, attitudes toward a traditional, four-year college path have shifted significantly, and working adults, long-considered non-traditional students, are now more prevalent than ever, representing more than 40%<sup>1</sup> of all students. According to research by ECMC Group as part of its public awareness campaign, Question The Quo, 50% of teenagers are open to considering something other than a four-year degree, 74% think that career and technical education (CTE) makes sense today and 25% are more likely to pursue CTE than before the pandemic.

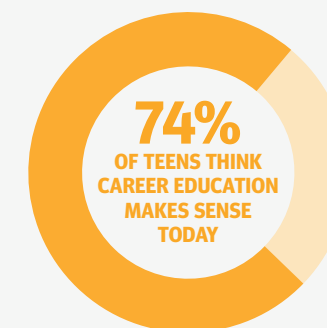
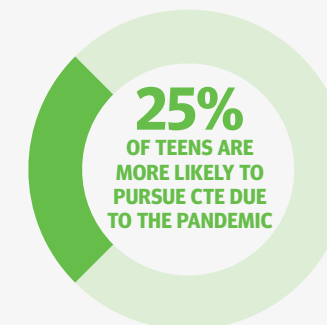
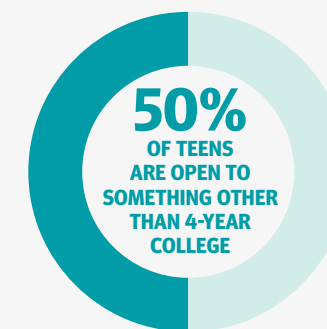
For ECMC Education and our focus on delivering quality CTE programs, these trends are encouraging. They also correspond to tremendous growth directly witnessed at our own CTE schools over the past several years. These shifting attitudes toward CTE represent positive developments for finally closing the skills gap in America. Furthermore, the increasing recognition that diverse educational pathways can lead to a good first job and a promising career also represents an opportunity for ECMC Education's mission. To this end, we will continue our investments in CTE while developing impactful learning models to deliver at a national scale.

The reality is that our economy and our nation depend on skilled workers of all ages and types. Traditional education and training models are not fully meeting the needs of today's workers, companies and industries. These groups require new, shorter and more dynamic training and onramps to careers than currently exist. As you peruse this report, I invite you to consider the possibilities for innovation and partnership with ECMC Education. Lastly, thank you for your interest in our work and in the future of CTE.



Josh Slayton, President, ECMC Education

## ECMC GROUP'S QUESTION THE QUO CAMPAIGN INSIGHTS



QUESTION THE QUO

<sup>1</sup> "College Student Employment," National Center for Education Statistics, May 2020.

OVERVIEW

# PIONEERING PATHWAYS FOR CTE

The middle-skills gap in America continues to widen at an astonishing clip, approaching crisis levels and raising the urgency for innovation in career and technical education (CTE). The number of open, unfilled jobs approached 11 million by the end of 2021 vs. 6.7 million the prior year<sup>1</sup>. Historically, half of these jobs<sup>2</sup> have required “middle skills” or those trained in CTE—healthcare workers, tradesmen and women, computer technicians and the like. ECMC Education seeks to help bridge this economic chasm through industry collaboration, technology-driven innovation and direct investment in next-generation CTE pathways.

<sup>1</sup> U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, “Table A. Job Openings, Hires, and Total Separations by Industry, Seasonally Adjusted,” February 1, 2022.

<sup>2</sup> David Cantor, “The ‘Middle Skills’ Gap: Half of America’s Jobs Require More than High School Diplomas but Less than 4-Year Degrees. So Why Are They under So Many Students’ Radars?,” *The 74*, December 10, 2018.

“The degree to which we can digitally engage and support learners across the entirety of their educational journeys, in-person and online, will significantly determine our success.”

Josh Slayton, President, ECMC Education

SUPPORTING  
DIGITAL  
ECOSYSTEM

FLEXIBLE/  
VIRTUAL CAMPUS

Enhanced digital student experience and virtual learning formats

EXTENDED  
REMOTE OPTIONS  
(in planning)

Extended, remote learning options not requiring a campus

DIRECT-TO-  
EMPLOYER  
TRAINING SOLUTIONS

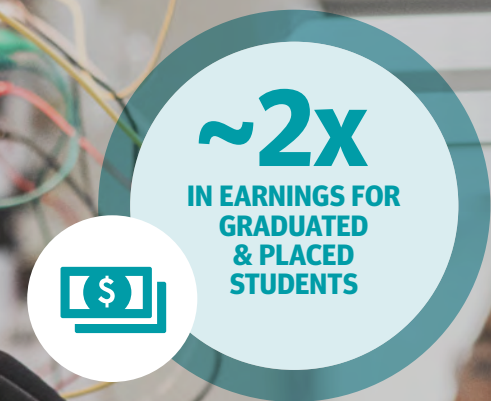
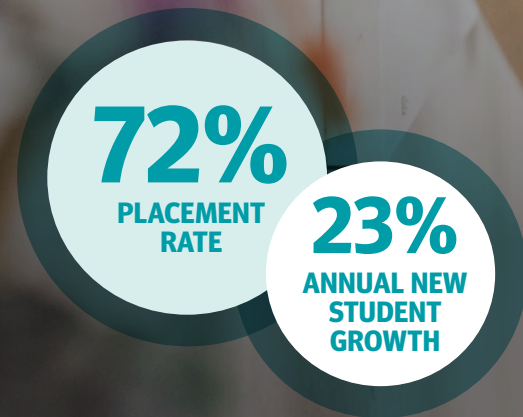
Workforce training solutions tailored to employers

# DELIVERING ON OUR MISSION

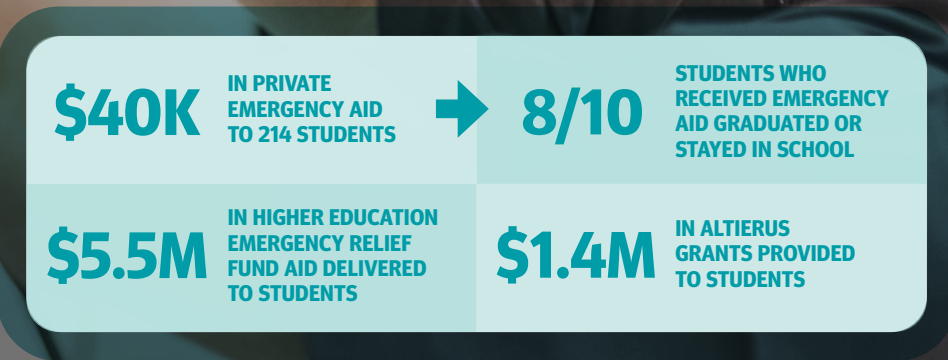
Despite the ongoing challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic, our mission-driven journey to serve learners and produce industry-leading outcomes continues—intact. Over the past three years, students at our schools have largely achieved success while trainees at our employer partners have excelled in their careers.

## 3-Year Performance Indicators<sup>1</sup>

### GRADUATION RATES



## 2021 Student Aid & Impact



## Skill Competency with Employer Partners



Training HVAC-R technicians in the workplace continued at our largest employer partner, CoolSys.

<sup>1</sup> From active programs between 2019-2021 reported to the Accrediting Commission of Career Schools and Colleges (ACCSC) by which Altierus Career College is accredited.  
<sup>2</sup> "Undergraduate Retention and Graduation Rates," National Center for Education Statistics, May 2021.

PROGRESS AT OUR SCHOOLS

# EVOLVING THE MODEL FOR STUDENTS

With the pandemic still in flux, we enhanced our flexible learning model and updated coursework to enable additional virtual learning opportunities. Students at Altierus Career College returned to campuses, but less frequently, and took advantage of newly available “open labs” to gain additional hands-on skills practice. Adopting new educational approaches has become our new norm while our decision-making criteria for modifications to our model remains focused on student success.



## SPARKS Cultural Framework

For faculty and staff at our schools, we launched a cultural framework to crystallize and reinforce key principles critical to our historical achievements and to guide our future success.



### AUGMENTED BLENDED LEARNING

Building on the blended learning model we developed in 2018, we launched newly enhanced, blended online/on-campus programming with expanded, high-quality simulations in 2021. Flexible learning has become an expectation of students—no longer a convenient option—to which we’re committed!

### NEW OPEN LABS

To bolster hands-on learning opportunities for students, we added the availability of “open labs,” which enables students to flexibly drop by campus and pick up extra field practice at their convenience.

### H.E.A.R.T. SUPPORT RESOURCES

To better serve students in an increasingly blended learning environment, we also introduced an online Holistic Educational And Resource Tool (HEART)—available 24/7—to assist with both school and life needs. It also includes assessments to help evaluate student career readiness and risk.

## BLENDED LEARNING

# MEANINGFULLY CONNECTING ONLINE & IN-PERSON LEARNING

At the outset of 2021, we augmented and enhanced our virtual learning capabilities at our schools for the benefit of students and outcomes. The work included updating online simulations, exercises and support resources to better prepare students for valuable in-person, hands-on lab time. The changes also enabled students to have more flexibility in their schedules and required less time on campus. Overall, the new format represented a powerful difference-maker for students.

## BLENDED

“The mix of home time to do most of my work and then coming here to get hands-on training is what attracted me to the program.”

Altierus Pharmacy Technician Student



## IN-PERSON

“I like the fact that when I get into lab, I’m doing all lab. I’m not wasting half my day sitting in a class listening to lectures that now we can do online at home. When I come into lab, I can be like ‘oh, yeah, this was on the simulation. This is what I need for this type of procedure.’”

Altierus Dental Assistant Student



## ONLINE

“What I like about the new model is the simulated videos...Everything is labeled and you can click in and click out...”

Altierus Medical Assistant Student



STUDENT SUCCESS

# MAKING A DIFFERENCE FOR LEARNERS & FAMILIES

After a year and a half of virtually hosting graduations online, 2021 graduates finally reclaimed their glory on stage at all three of our locations. Graduates, families and friends gathered in celebration, tears of joy and sweet achievement. For many graduates, they represented the first generation of their families attending and completing postsecondary education. The in-person ceremonies were powerful reminders of our interconnectedness and collective spirit.



“My life before Altierus was a mom of three working a full-time job knowing that I wanted something different, something more out of life.”

Altierus Graduate



“The teachers really do care about you, and they really will push you to the best of your ability.”

Altierus Graduate



“I came to the U.S. five years ago as an immigrant with a dream to gather success one day. That’s the reason I chose this career and why I chose to enroll in this college.”

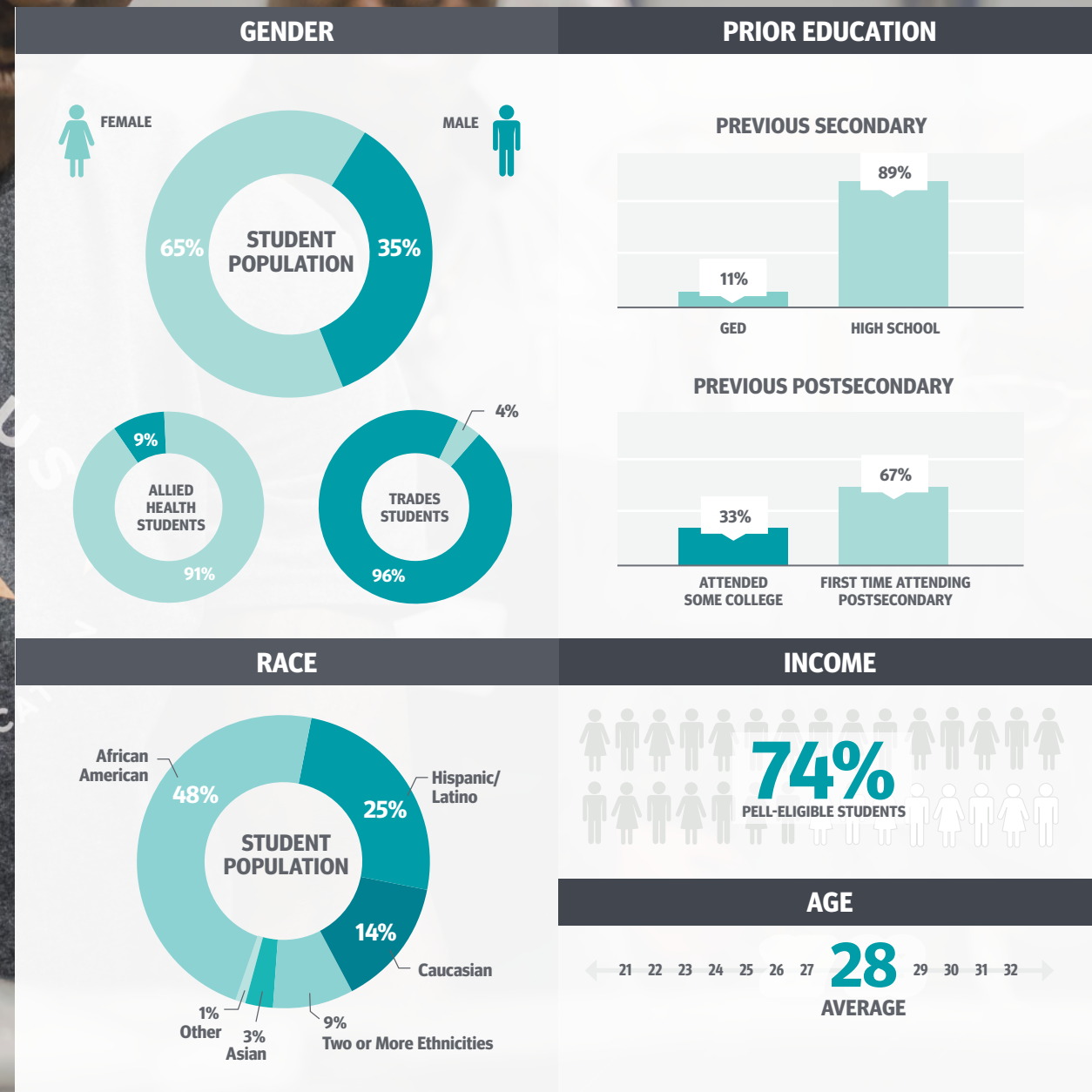
Altierus Graduate

VALUES IN ACTION

# CONTINUING TO PROMOTE DIVERSITY, EQUITY & INCLUSION

Promoting diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) continues to be at the forefront of our values. Solving the systemic disadvantages of underserved populations in our country requires continuous vigilance and effort. At ECMC Education, we proudly serve and support learners who often represent such underserved groups, seeking to forge a more equitable way forward.

**7**  
EMPLOYEE NETWORKING GROUPS PROMOTING DEI





**KEY INVESTMENTS**

# INVESTING IN LEARNER SUCCESS

In 2018, ECMC Education established a blueprint for transforming CTE with technology illuminating the way. In 2021, this philosophy continued to shine bright. With help from supplemental Higher Education Emergency Relief Fund (HEERF) and CARES Act funding, past grants from ECMC Foundation and our own investments, we progressed on objectives to bring alternative training models to bear. In pursuit of greater educational access, higher completion rates and improved skill competency, today's innovations will positively impact tomorrow's learners in more scalable and efficacious ways than thought possible.



## 2021 Investments



### ANYTIME, ANYWHERE LEARNING TOOLS

At our schools, we doubled down on blended learning, and for employers, we integrated online learning with field training as part of a new solution offering.



### ENHANCED LEARNING SIMULATIONS

Investments deepened and broadened our learning content in 2021 while fueling continued experimentation in new learning modalities, like virtual reality.



### AUGMENTED ADVISING

Organizational restructuring and additional oversight staffing aimed to increase visibility to at-risk students and enhance the learning experience for all students.



### RESEARCH & DEVELOPMENT

To plot our future course, we conducted a variety of market research engagements, customer insights inquiries, innovation excursions and modeling exercises.

**PROGRESS WITH EMPLOYER TRAINING**

# READY, SET, LAUNCH

In 2021, Altierus Training Solutions (ATS) developed and launched a new training solution—the New Hire Accelerator—to help HVAC employers efficiently and effectively close skills gaps with entry-level personnel. The objective: Help them get field-ready talent faster to meet market demand and to fuel growth in their businesses. In tandem, we grew our sales and operations team and built relationships with new partners who shared in our training vision. Our goal is to collaborate with those in the industry to deliver training innovation that catalyzes growth.



## New Customer Spotlight

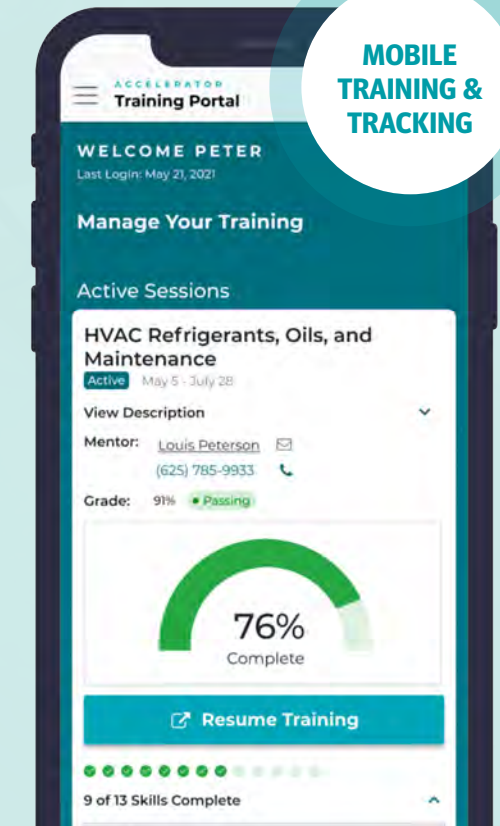
In 2021, ATS became a proud partner with the Conditioned Air Association of Georgia (CAAG), a statewide advocacy group for HVAC contractors and companies, as they sought new ways to promote quality assurance and professionalism in the HVAC-Refrigeration industry. The organization immediately saw value in the New Hire Accelerator, and we built a special program for its members to gain access to the solution on a collective basis.



### INTRODUCING ACCELERATOR: GET FIELD-READY TECHNICIANS FASTER

While the market speeds ahead, employer training practices have remained staid. The New Hire Accelerator was designed to combat training inefficiency and ineffectiveness within organizations that need immediate talent. It was built on the following principles:

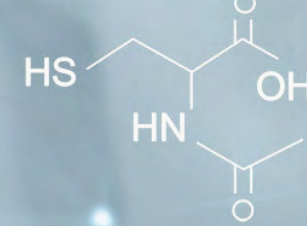
- 1 Anywhere, anytime employer-informed scalable training
- 2 The best of online and in-field training—integrated
- 3 Comprehensive learner support model



**LOOKING AHEAD**

# FURTHERING CTE AT SCALE

Leading the transformation of career and technical education is a multi-year pursuit. The landscape continues to rapidly shift, consolidate and in some ways, retreat to safe harbors. Bold action and resolute fortitude are required to move the industry forward in new ways; innovation must never relent. To this end, our focus areas for future investment remain steadfast year over year.



### NEW EDUCATIONAL MODELS

Extensions of educational programming, such as employer training solutions, to reach more learners and to broaden impact across the country



### DISRUPTIVE TECHNOLOGY

Expansion of current operations through innovation and new technology, such as virtual reality and remote skill verification systems

## Future Investment Areas



### INDUSTRY COLLABORATIONS

Partnerships with workforce organizations, employer networks, policymakers and community organizations to help open new pathways for CTE



### GROWTH INVESTMENTS

Growth through organic investment, strategic and mission-aligned partnerships, and acquisition

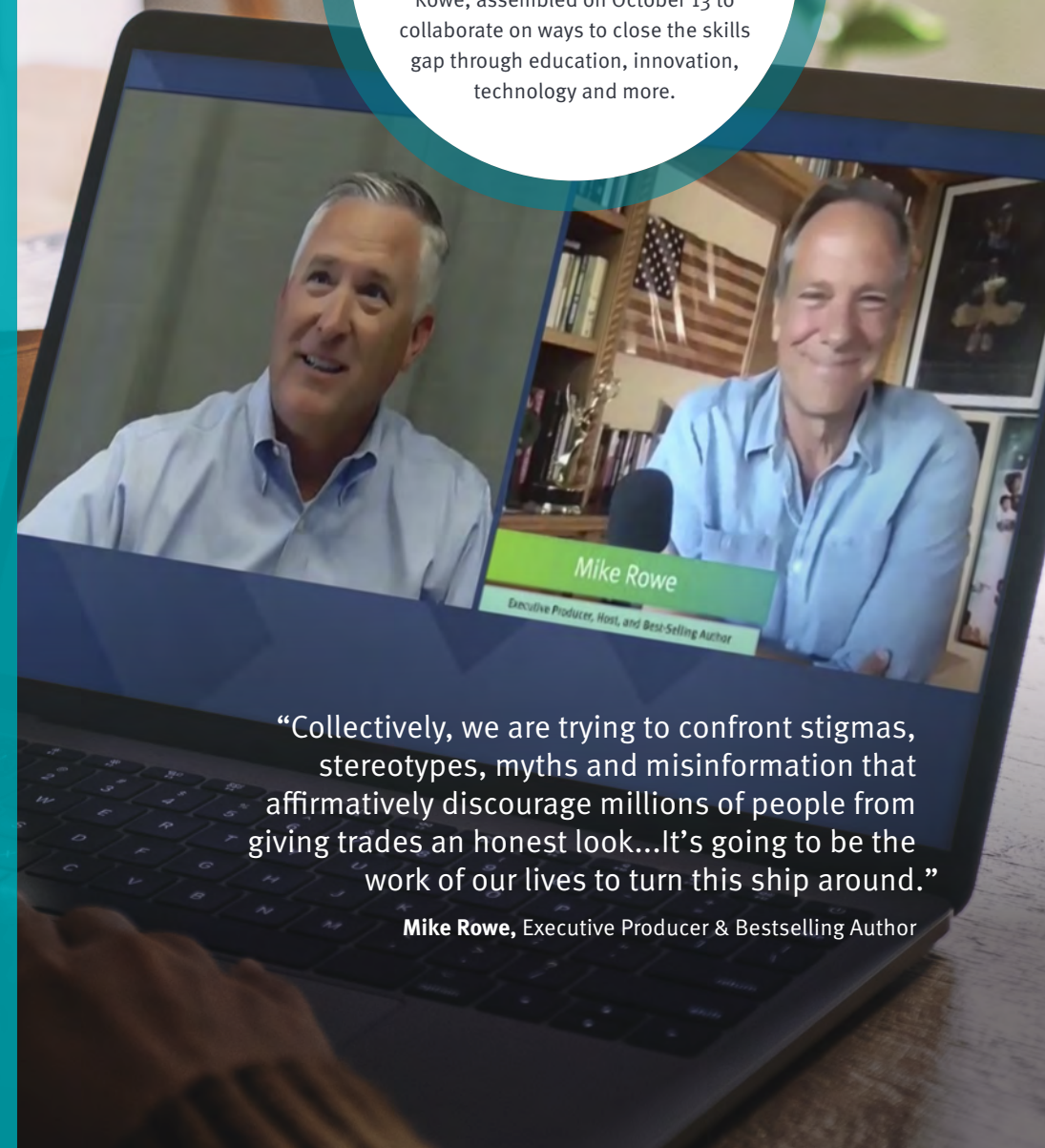
**THOUGHT LEADERSHIP**

# GENERATING INSIGHTS & AWARENESS

In 2021, ECMC Education continued its partnership with ECMC Group’s Question The Quo campaign, which aims to destigmatize CTE and promote insights on educational trends. The public awareness campaign garnered wide recognition and accolades for its groundbreaking work. Also, as part of the national launch of our New Hire Accelerator training solution for employers (pages 16-17), ECMC Education hosted a successful workforce innovation event, featuring CTE advocate/producer Mike Rowe and industry leaders. The robust panel discussion examined ongoing issues, needs and solutions for solving America's middle-skills gap.

**WORKFORCE INNOVATION PANEL WITH MIKE ROWE**

To launch Altierus Training Solutions, industry leaders, along with trades activist and bestselling author Mike Rowe, assembled on October 13 to collaborate on ways to close the skills gap through education, innovation, technology and more.



“Collectively, we are trying to confront stigmas, stereotypes, myths and misinformation that affirmatively discourage millions of people from giving trades an honest look...It’s going to be the work of our lives to turn this ship around.”

**Mike Rowe**, Executive Producer & Bestselling Author

**QUESTION THE QUO**

Year 2 of Question The Quo ushered in new, eye-opening research and data around the educational preferences of today’s youth: “Our latest survey revealed that teenagers are prioritizing shorter, less expensive pathways over four-year college despite feeling pressure to follow that path.”

**QUESTION THE QUO**

**MEDIA COVERAGE**

Our influence around the skills gap and postsecondary education space has been tremendous. In 2021, we were quoted, featured and referenced across multiple news outlets and mediums, as well as mentioned more than 400 times across media outlets.



**MEDIA AWARDS**

Our Question The Quo program was named a winner for "Best Instagram Campaign" by PRNews, and also was an 11-time finalist or honorable mention in other media award programs.

**PR NEWS**

**OUTREACH**

# BUILDING OUR COMMUNITIES UP

We pride ourselves in being a nonprofit and continuously strive to serve, elevate and empower communities in line with our mission. In 2021, we continued our tradition of nominating local, mission-aligned organizations for financial grants through our affiliate ECMC Foundation. We also volunteered, sponsored educational events and partnered with employers on scholarships for minority students to drive meaningful impact and outcomes.



**Junior Achievement®**  
**Hosting Junior Achievers at Our Schools**

“Junior Achievement of Southeast Texas is grateful to Altierus Career College for the newly formed partnership. The facilities and labs are state of the art and they really opened the eyes of the students to their potential!”

**Carla Crowe**, Director of Resource Development



**TARGETED GRANTMAKING**  
Through nominations by employees, ECMC Education’s philanthropic affiliate ECMC Foundation funded \$1 million in grants to support 101 mission-aligned nonprofits in our local markets.



**VOLUNTEERISM**  
Throughout the year, employees across our headquarters and campus locations participated in a variety of virtual and socially distanced volunteer opportunities, continuing to demonstrate concern, support and pride in our communities.

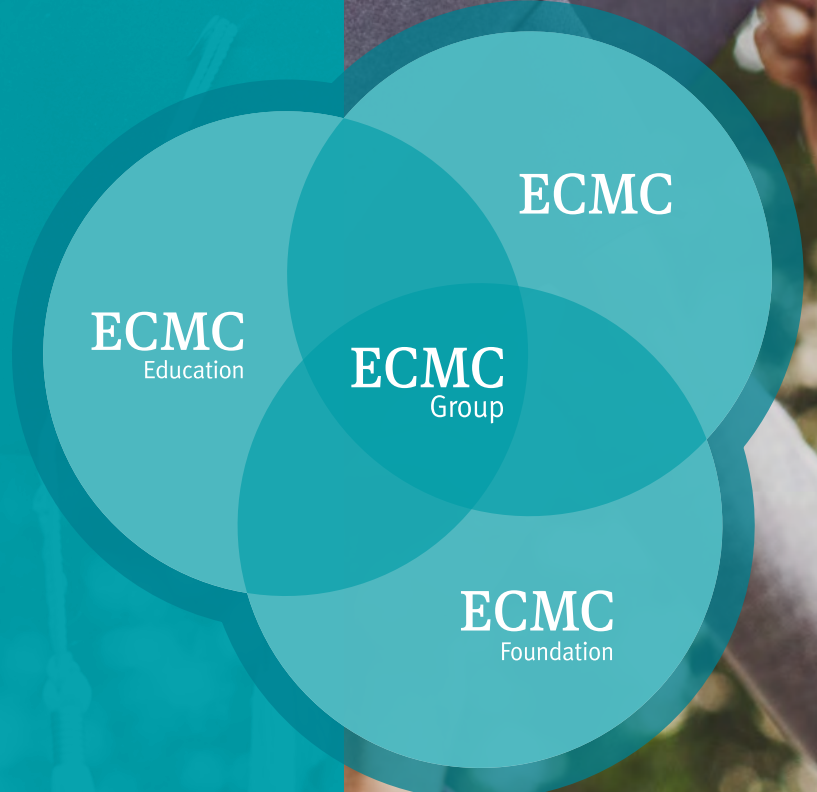


**EDUCATIONAL SPONSORSHIP**  
In partnership with Hobart Services, the Houston Area Urban League and other community organizations, we offered full scholarships to minority students while promoting our own American Dream Scholarship throughout the community.

**ABOUT ECMC GROUP COMPANIES**

# OUTCOMES POWERED BY OUR FAMILY OF COMPANIES

ECMC Education’s parent organization ECMC Group and its affiliates empower underserved communities to thrive by means of a unique combination of educational solutions, investments and philanthropy.



**COLLABORATION WITH ECMC**

Our affiliate ECMC provides financial counseling and education services to empower learners to make better choices about their futures. For example, ECMC Education works with Solutions, a service of ECMC, to ensure that learners who have student loans receive monthly outreach during their grace period and beyond.



**4.5M**

Students and families to whom ECMC has provided resources to help plan and pay for higher education (since 1994)

**SUPPORT FROM ECMC FOUNDATION**

Our philanthropic affiliate ECMC Foundation focuses on improving higher education and career success among underserved populations through evidence-based innovation.



**\$236M+**

In grants and investments dispersed by ECMC Foundation on a national basis (May 2014-December 2021)

**ECMC GROUP EDUCATION IMPACT FUND INVESTING IN EDUCATION**

The ECMC Group Education Impact Fund invests in mission-aligned, impact-driven and financially scalable early stage and growth ventures that are focused on postsecondary education and employment.



**\$250M**

Committed to fund education and workforce solutions (as of December 2021)



[www.ecmceducation.org](http://www.ecmceducation.org)

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