

Collegiate Edu-Nation Launches Public Phase of \$15 Million “North Star Venture” Campaign to Expand Opportunity Across Rural Communities



Grapevine, Texas – During the 2026 Rural Empowerment Conference (REC), Collegiate Edu-Nation (CEN) officially announced the public launch of the North Star Venture Campaign, a bold \$15 million philanthropic initiative focused on expanding educational opportunity, workforce pathways, and economic mobility across rural communities.

After spending nearly the past year in a quiet phase of fundraising, CEN has already secured more than \$7 million toward the campaign goal through investments from philanthropic organizations, community partners, and supporters committed to strengthening the future of rural America.

The campaign’s early momentum reflects a growing recognition that rural communities deserve innovative solutions, long-term investment, and strong systems that connect education directly to opportunity.

The North Star Venture Campaign represents the largest fundraising initiative in CEN’s history and will support the continued expansion of rural P-20 education systems, dual credit and P-TECH pathways, workforce development initiatives, teacher recruitment and training programs, adult learning opportunities, registered apprenticeships, and career-connected partnerships with higher education and industry.

Through this work, CEN aims to expand its impact over time to reach approximately 100 rural school districts and more than 300 rural communities, helping strengthen educational and workforce opportunities for students, families, and adult learners across Texas and beyond.

Over the next two years, CEN aims to complete the remaining fundraising efforts needed to fully realize the campaign’s vision and expand impact across additional rural communities throughout Texas and beyond.

“This campaign is about creating long-term opportunities for rural students, families, and communities,” said Chris Coxon, President of Collegiate Edu-Nation. “Rural communities have incredible strengths, and through strategic partnerships and investment, we can help build systems that prepare students for meaningful futures while strengthening local economies.”



“RURAL COMMUNITIES HAVE INCREDIBLE STRENGTHS, AND THE NORTH STAR VENTURE CAMPAIGN IS ABOUT ENSURING RURAL COMMUNITIES ARE NOT LEFT BEHIND AS THE FUTURE OF EDUCATION AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT CONTINUES TO EVOLVE.”

-CHRIS COXEN
PRESIDENT OF CEN

CEN currently works alongside rural school districts, higher education institutions, workforce organizations, businesses, and community leaders to support aligned pathways from Pre-K through postsecondary education and into careers. Through its rural P-20 model, the organization focuses on helping communities create sustainable systems that improve educational attainment, workforce readiness, and economic opportunity.

Dr. Kim Alexander, CEO of Collegiate Edu-Nation, emphasized the importance of investing in rural innovation and leadership.

“For too long, rural communities have been asked to do more with less,” said Alexander. “The North Star Venture Campaign is about investing in the potential that already exists in rural communities. We believe rural schools and communities can lead innovation, create strong workforce pipelines, and provide opportunities that allow students and families to thrive close to home. This work is ultimately about building stronger futures for the next generation.”

Campaign investments will support initiatives focused on instructional transformation, career-connected learning, teacher pipeline development, postsecondary success, workforce training, adult education, and regional partnerships that strengthen rural sustainability and economic growth.



Susan Grove, Chief Development Officer for Collegiate Edu-Nation, shared her excitement about the momentum already generated during the campaign’s silent phase.

“The response to this campaign has been incredibly encouraging,” said Grove. “Philanthropic leaders and community partners across the country recognize both the challenges and the extraordinary potential within rural communities. The North Star Venture Campaign gives us the opportunity to scale solutions, strengthen partnerships, and expand opportunities for thousands of students and adult learners across rural Texas. We are deeply grateful for the supporters who have already invested in this vision and excited about the work still ahead.”

THE NORTH STAR VENTURE CAMPAIGN GIVES US THE OPPORTUNITY TO SCALE SOLUTIONS, STRENGTHEN PARTNERSHIPS, AND EXPAND OPPORTUNITIES FOR THOUSANDS OF STUDENTS AND ADULT LEARNERS ACROSS RURAL TEXAS.

-SUSAN GROVE
CHIEF DEVELOPMENT OFFICER



The campaign announcement took place during REC 2026, CEN's annual Rural Empowerment Conference, which brings together educators, workforce leaders, higher education institutions, philanthropic organizations, businesses, and community stakeholders committed to advancing rural innovation and opportunity.

The North Star Venture Campaign is also supported by the North Star Leadership Council, a statewide group of leaders and advocates committed to strengthening opportunity, innovation, and long-term sustainability across rural communities.

For more information about the North Star Venture Campaign, to view the North Star Leadership Council, or to learn how to support the initiative, visit www.edu-nation.org.



About Collegiate Edu-Nation:

Collegiate Edu-Nation (CEN) is a Texas-based nonprofit organization dedicated to empowering rural communities through innovative P-20 education systems that connect students and adult learners to meaningful college, career, and workforce opportunities. Through partnerships with school districts, higher education institutions, workforce organizations, and industry leaders, CEN supports rural communities in building sustainable pathways for long-term success.