

# The Center for Black Excellence and Culture: Ascendium gifts \$2.5 million

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**Madison, Wis. - May 24, 2022** - Today, The Center for Black Excellence and Culture - a multimillion-dollar project inspired, designed, and led by Black residents - announced it has received a \$2.5 million gift from Ascendium Education Group. The Madison-based nonprofit became the third major founding donor in The Center's \$36 million capital campaign, joining Summit Credit Union and American Family Insurance.

Additionally, The Center announced yet another surge of major gifts from businesses, foundations and individuals over recent months (see list below). Only nine months into this historic campaign, The Center has now raised over \$20 million toward building a cultural center that will affirm, inspire and advance the lives of thousands each year.

Black community members laid the foundation of the more than 400 donors and business who've joined an unprecedented and rapidly growing public and private collective. The grassroots enthusiasm that defined the early days has transformed into quantifiable momentum that will soon take the real shape of a forever-home for Black Madisonians.

For 55 years, Ascendium has been committed to helping as many people as possible experience the transformative power of education and training beyond high school. Ascendium is the nation's largest federal student loan guarantor, a leading postsecondary education philanthropy and a provider of solutions to support academic achievement, long-term financial wellness and student loan repayment success.

"The Center will allow people of all ages to immerse themselves in a community

that believes in their promise and brilliance,” said Amy Kerwin, Ascendium’s vice president – education philanthropy. “The community’s coming together to support The Center has been incredibly inspiring. Ascendium looks forward to helping The Center foster education and workforce training opportunities and develop the next generation of leaders that will guide Madison and the surrounding communities to new heights.”

“We are enormously grateful to Ascendium and thrilled to embark on this partnership to unlock the full potential of everyone who walks through The Center’s doors,” said Dr. Alex Gee, Founder and CEO of The Center. “I am overjoyed that so many new businesses and individuals continue to lock arms with this historic undertaking. Thanks to their generosity and faith in this community, our dream of a Black cultural home will soon no longer live as only a vision.”

The Center is proud to announce gifts from the following businesses, foundations and individuals:

**\$2,500,000**

Ascendium

**\$250,000-\$500,000**

Oscar Rennebohm Foundation, Inc.

Jan & Bill DeAtley

Comer Family Foundation

Madison Gas & Electric Foundation

BMO Harris Bank

Lau & Bea Christensen

**\$100,000-\$249,999**

TDS Telecom

Jack & Sarah Salzwedel

## **\$50,000-\$99,000**

Dave Boyer & Joan Philip

Organizations and individuals can give to The Center at <https://www.theblackcenter.org/donate>. For more information about The Center, visit <https://www.theblackcenter.org/>.

### **About The Center for Black Excellence and Culture:**

The Center for Black Excellence and Culture (The Center) will answer the decades-long absence of cultural space to celebrate and advance Dane County's Black community. Located on six acres within the heart of a historically Black neighborhood, The Center will be a physical place where Dane County's Black residents and others throughout the community can gather to plan for and celebrate current and future growth and advancement.

Specifically, The Center will: Celebrate and promote Black excellence; Foster a sense of family and community; Pay tribute to Black history; Nurture and develop Black business and community leaders; Attract, connect and retain Black talent; and provide the space for conversation, connection and growth.