



**MARSAL FAMILY
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UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

EFFECTIVE RESEARCH PARTNERSHIPS FOR POLICY AND PRACTICE

2025 SHEEO POLICY CONFERENCE | AUGUST 12, 2025



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Why partner? Why now?

“Research conducted in education [research-practice partnerships] can result in new insights into the processes, practices, and policies that improve education for students, educators, families, and communities.”

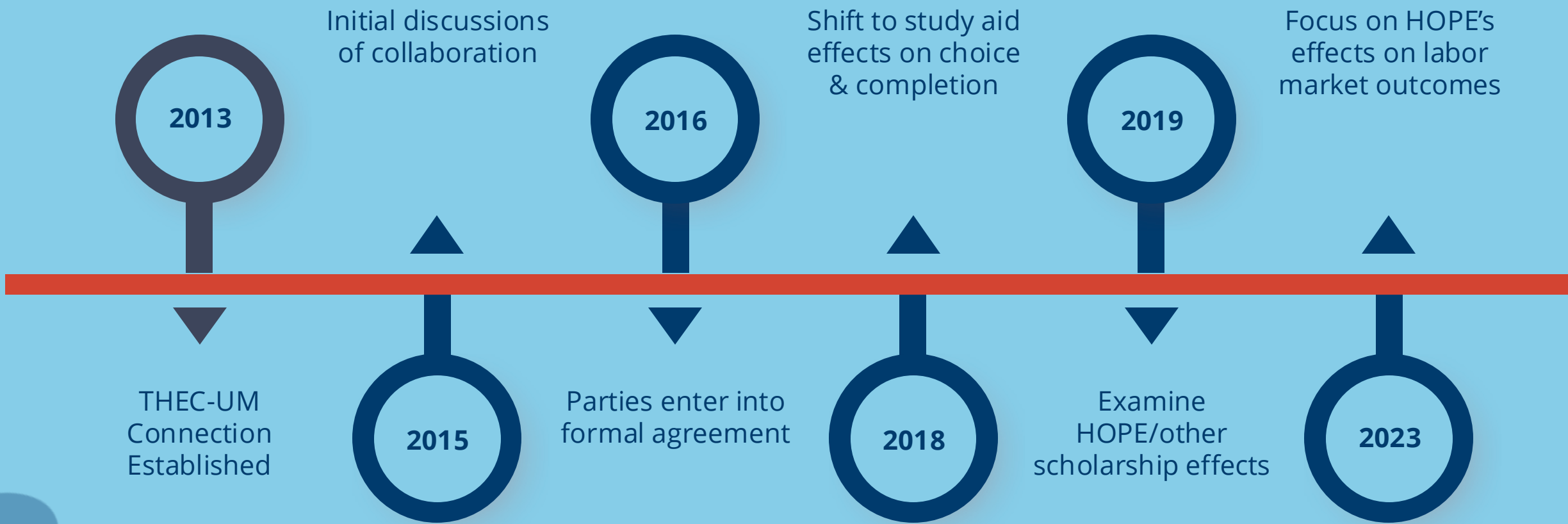
-Farrell, C.C., Penuel, W.R., Coburn, C., Daniel, J., & Steup, L. (2021).
Research-practice partnerships in education: The state of the field. William T. Grant Foundation.



How did we get here?



THEC-UM Partnership Timeline



Key Takeaways – Project Foundation

- Try to leverage established relationships
- Initial timelines are usually grossly underestimated
- Make the research useful for decision makers
- Expect setbacks
- Try to have fun!



Current Partnership Efforts

- **THEC and UMCSHPE received a research grant from the Institute of Education Sciences in May 2024**
 - Evaluation of the TN HOPE Financial Aid Program
 - Funding supported both THEC and UMCSHPE
 - If at first you don't succeed ... try again!
- **Key takeaways from (multiple) grant applications**
 - Demonstrating collaboration is key
 - Focus on real, timely policy priorities
 - Lean on/highlight each partner's strengths, including rigorous methods
 - Designated roles and responsibilities
 - Clear plan for communicating findings to wide audience



What do we hope to accomplish?



Partnership Objectives - THEC

- **Administrative and Logistical:**
 - Internal data system improvements
 - Accessibility of financial aid data in state longitudinal data system
- **Expanding Knowledge Base:**
 - Evidence of state financial aid effectiveness
 - Communicating research findings to diverse stakeholders
- **Human Resources Development:**
 - Professional development in research methods
- **Key Deliverables:**
 - Legislative memos
 - Presentations and in-person conversations



Partnership Objectives – UM CSHPE

- **Administrative and Logistical:**
 - Access to robust data and contextual knowledge
- **Expanding Knowledge Base:**
 - Applying new empirical strategies and answering novel research questions
 - Communicating research findings to diverse stakeholders
- **Human Resources Development:**
 - Applied training for project team members
 - Dissertation projects and career connections
- **Key Deliverables:**
 - Conference presentations
 - Published manuscripts



What do we each bring to the project?



Partnership Contributions - THEC

- Lived experience in policy environment
- Deep, historical knowledge of policies
- Direct relationships and connections
- Awareness of (un)spoken policy goals
- Access to and familiarity with project data
- Ability to translate/communicate complex findings



Partnership Contributions – UM CSHPE

- Deep knowledge of prior empirical research
- Familiarity with key theoretical perspectives
- Extensive training in research methodologies
- Experience working with administrative and labor market data
- External perspective on policy environment
- Capacity

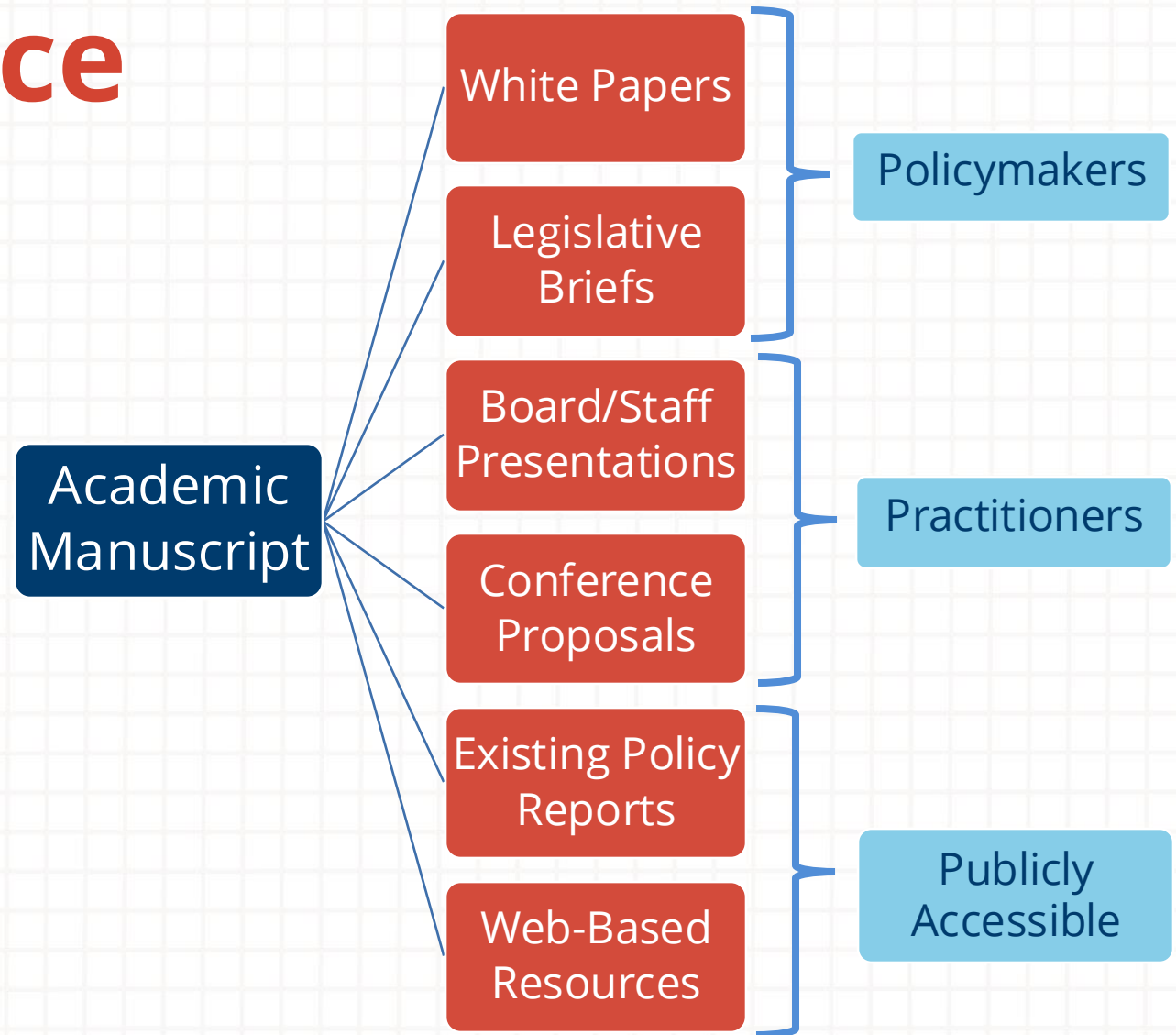


**How do we translate this into
products/outputs?**



Striking a Balance

- Working together to achieve shared goals, but also accomplish objectives unique to each partner
- Reverse engineered deliverables to achieve these objectives
- Emphasis on presenting the right information to the target audience in the most effective way



Striking a Balance – In Practice

Key Outputs	Description	Deadline	Notes
2025 AEFP Presentation	Prelim. Findings on HOPE Receipt	March (past)	Precursor to Quantitative Work
2025 AEFP Presentation	Prelim. Findings from Student Interviews	March (past)	Precursor to Qualitative Work
SHEEO Presentation	Partnership	12-Aug	Today!
White Paper 1	Setup of Working Paper Series	15-Sep	Project Team Review, then distribute
White Paper 2	HOPE Receipt on LMOs	15-Sep	Project Team Review, then distribute
APPAM Presentation - Review	HOPE Receipt on LMOs	26-Sep	All TN Review, then revise
AEFP Proposal Submission	HOPE Receipt on AOs	6-Oct	Deadline TBA
ASHE Presentation - Review	Financial Aid Focus Groups	6-Oct	All TN Review, then revise
APPAM/ASHE Presentations	Conference Presentations	15-Nov	Present Revised Findings
White Paper 3	HOPE Receipt on AOs	15-Dec	Project Team Review, then distribute
White Paper 4	HOPE Loss on LMOs	15-Dec	Project Team Review, then distribute
White Paper 5	Student Interviews	15-Jan	Project Team Review, then distribute
White Paper 6	HOPE Loss on AOs	15-Jan	Project Team Review, then distribute
Commission Meeting	Project Overview	Early February	Overview of Project for Commission/Staff
Nashville Trip	(4) 10-minute summaries	Early February	Mini Presentation of Each Manuscript
White Paper 7	FAA Focus Groups	15-Feb	Project Team Review, then distribute
White Paper 8	Subgroup Analyses	15-Mar	Project Team Review, then distribute
White Paper 9	Mediation/Pathway Analysis	15-Apr	Project Team Review, then distribute
Quant Manuscript #1	HOPE Receipt on Student Outcomes	30-Apr	All TN Review, then revise
Quant Manuscript #2	Analysis of Subgroups and Mediation	30-Apr	All TN Review, then revise
Qual Manuscript #1	Student Interviews	30-Apr	Project Team Review, then distribute
Qual Manuscript #2	Focus Groups	30-Apr	Project Team Review, then distribute



Where are we going from here?



Plotting the Future

- **Informing Practice**

- Improve THEC reporting on financial aid
- Increasing THEC staff capacity to design/conduct research

- **Influencing Policy**

- Communicating new policy ideas to policymakers via White Papers and Commission Meeting Presentations

- **Increasing Awareness**

- Publicly-available toolkits and dashboards on THEC website
- Incorporating findings into existing policy reports in TN

- **Improving Research Base**

- Academic and Professional Conferences
- Multiple Manuscripts in preparation



Key Takeaways from Panelists

- THEC Leadership
- THEC Research
- UM Faculty and Student
- Recommendations and Considerations



Questions?





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