

# MISSION REPORT







# A message from Dr. Leigh Anne Taylor Knight



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Established in 1988 by Paul DeBruce, **The DeBruce Foundation** has been generously supporting causes to improve lives and strengthen communities.

Today, our mission is to **expand pathways to economic growth and opportunity**.

Some of you reading this are long-time partners, many of you fellow Kansas Citians. Others may just be getting to know us and connecting from across the country. Either way, we are **grateful for the spirit of collaboration** with which you approach making a difference. It is from what you have taught us and with a heart of gratitude that we share this **Mission Report**.

We believe, together, we can:

- Empower individuals to craft and effectively pursue career goals; and
- Raise confidence and network strength for those who are employment challenged.

This is **how we equip people** with what it takes **to launch careers and navigate career transitions** across a lifetime.

This report highlights **progress across 2018-2022**. You will discover more about our programs, products, research, and partnerships. You'll learn about the **Agilities**, our proprietary **career literacy tools**, and the **power of networks**.

We hope to shed light and spark ideas on how organizations can **partner with us** to expand career pathways. Together we can do extraordinary things. In fact, it is by way of amazing partners we have recently **passed a milestone of 100,000 completions** of our career assessment tool, the **Agile Work Profiler**, bringing **greater career literacy** to individuals.

**Thank you** to our board, team members, and partners who are valuable contributors to this incredible journey!

With appreciation,

**Dr. Leigh Anne Taylor Knight**  
Executive Director and COO

# Who we are

The DeBruce Foundation is a national foundation located in Kansas City, Missouri, whose mission is to expand pathways to economic growth and opportunity. The Foundation is committed to helping individuals unlock their potential and find career pathways. By developing solutions such as the Agile Work Profiler, we change how people pursue careers. By partnering strategically, we increase experiences and exposure to widen career opportunities, starting with youth and working across the lifespan.



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## INSIGHTS

Four examples

# Actionable Research

The DeBruce Foundation **conducts and commissions** career-related research to gain insights for product development. These examples illustrate how the rigorous projects inform approaches across the lifespan.

### Higher Education in a Pandemic: Adult Learners and COVID-19

Fall 2020: The University of Missouri-Kansas City's Urban Education Research Center (UERC) and Council for Adult and Experiential Learning (CAEL) conducted focus groups with faculty and adult learners from 16 institutions. Capturing adult learner voices, it highlighted actionable ways institutions help students navigate challenges.

### Public Opinion Research – Youth and Parents

2019: Public opinion research with 700 youth and 300 adults indicated there is a tremendous opportunity to impact youth who have yet to decide on a career path or don't know where to start.

2021: A second research round found 90% of youth are confident they will achieve their career goals, yet only 63% reported knowing what things to do to prepare for a career, and only 35% of youth know what career they want. In addition, 67% of youth have considered two or fewer careers, despite national trends that show they will hold an average of 12 different jobs throughout their working life.

### High Schoolers Improve with Use of Agile Work Profiler & Career Explorer Tools

2018: An urban high school in the Kansas City metro tested how well the Agile Work Profiler and Career Explorer Tools worked in promoting career awareness and related skills among high school students. Findings revealed students who use The DeBruce Foundation's Agilities® tools increase their career literacy.

#### The average student who used The DeBruce Foundation's Agilities® tools\*



Experienced nearly five times the growth in career exploration skills



Explored nearly three more careers



Experienced a 10% greater increase in self-reliance



Experienced a 17% increase in confidence to overcome obstacles

\*compared to peers

Read about our insights at [debruce.org/insights](https://debruce.org/insights).



## EMPLOYMENT EMPOWERMENT

**What does it take to build careers with higher wages, less risk of unemployment, better benefits, more autonomy over work conditions, and the ability to build savings? In other words, what does it take to build an empowered career?**

In fall 2020, The DeBruce Foundation initiated a nationally representative longitudinal trend survey to assess patterns of employment, income, and work conditions in America. After surveying a total of 16,000 people, the findings resulted in a first-of-its-kind research report that identified **two key factors** for building empowered careers:

- 1. Career literacy:** a vision for your career, self-awareness of your skills and interests, capacity to communicate your professional value, robust job search skills, and the capability to explore multiple career pathways
- 2. Network strength:** reliable and supportive connections with people spanning a diversity of industries, education levels, and social experiences

In the study, those who rated high in both career literacy and network strength earned 55% more in annual salary and considered 17% more jobs outside their current career path. Additionally, 26% more of them are currently employed. They also reported having better benefits, more control over work conditions, and more savings for emergency and long-term needs.

Both career literacy and network strength can be built and developed, which means we, together with our community partners, can help individuals build empowered careers.

The full research report is available at [DeBruce.org](https://DeBruce.org) and provides actionable insights for workforce development professionals, educators, and all who are invested in helping individuals build thriving career paths.

**“... When we elevate [job seekers'] career literacy and professional network, they achieve greater career success and satisfaction.”**

— Dan Denniston, Indiana Department of Workforce Development



# INITIATIVES

Four examples



## CAREER CORPS

In 2018, an initiative launched to integrate youth voices into the work of The Foundation. To create a successful future of work, we knew it would be vital to work alongside young leaders currently launching their careers. Team members and young adults tested and co-created the model, DeBruce Career Corps.

DeBruce Career Corps is a collective of more than 50 young people, ranging in age from 14 to 24 years. They meet monthly via video call from across the nation to advise The Foundation as well as receive support from each other on their own career journeys.

Collectively, they shed light on their education and workforce experiences, test career resources, and provide insights to our mission. Members present at national workshops, get interviewed for career news stories, advise during historic workforce upheavals, design programs to reach other youth, and more!



“Sometimes there’s a wall that divides youth from adults. If we can take that wall down and work together, we can make a change that’s for the better.”

— Riley, DeBruce Career Corps Member



## CAREER LITERACY RESOURCES

We help build empowered careers by **providing tools** to help individuals develop career literacy.



### AGILE WORK PROFILER

An online career assessment that provides you with a list of your current skills and interests – what we call your Agilities – as they relate to the workforce.



### THE CAREER EXPLORER TOOLS

A suite of interactive online tools with which you can learn about the income, preparation, work activities, and demand for each career.



### DRAW YOUR FUTURE WITH AGILITIES

A fun activity that helps you think critically about your Agilities related to your current reality, desired future, and steps to achieve your goals.



### AGILE XP

A set of interactive self-reflection activities to help build your career literacy and network strength a few minutes at a time.

### CERTIFIED AGILITY COACH TRAINING

Professional development that trains you to become a Certified Agility Coach, meaning you can teach career literacy to others.



Agility coaches trained throughout the U.S.





“... employers and employees are finding virtual internships can help increase access and improve equity in the workforce – now and in the future.”

— Leigh Anne Taylor Knight  
in *Hispanic Outlook on Education Magazine™*

## VSHIPS

Internships are crucial for preparing individuals for a successful future and building a sustainable workforce. But in May 2020, U.S. internship openings were 49% lower than the year prior, according to the career site Glassdoor.

As a response, we created **vShips**, an initiative to help employers and employees pivot to virtual internships and save these crucial early career opportunities. We convened four webinars for employers, featuring guest speakers from across the country; launched a resource hub; and hosted two national workshops for internship seekers.

Out of this pandemic response emerged new and ongoing partnerships, such as our collaboration with the **Kansas Board of Regents, Kansas Department of Commerce, and Parker Dewey**. Together, we launched the statewide **Kansas Micro-Internship Program**, which provides college students opportunities to work on short-term, paid, professional projects with Kansas-based organizations. Recently, the program was awarded \$400,000 by **Strada Education Network** to advance this statewide initiative.



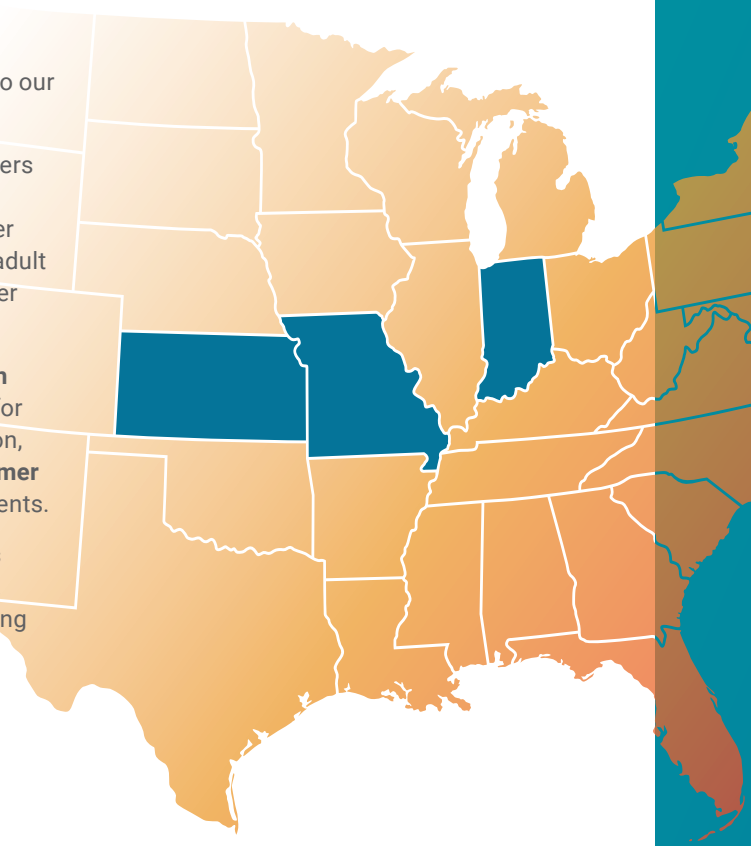
## STATE INITIATIVES

We build partnerships at the state level to expand access to our career resources and strengthen workforce initiatives.

The **Indiana Department of Workforce Development** partners with us to include the Agile Work Profiler in their online workforce experience known as the Indiana Career Explorer (INCE). INCE is designed to serve Indiana residents, from adult clients of Indiana’s WorkOne locations, to students in higher education, and youth in Indiana high schools.

Aligned with the **Missouri Department of Higher Education and Workforce Development’s** focus on bridge programs for students who are transitioning to post-secondary education, we work with the **University of Missouri-Kansas City Summer Bridge program** to boost career literacy for incoming students.

We collaborate with the **College Advising Corps of Kansas State University** and the **University of Missouri-Columbia**. Advisors incorporate Agilites® resources into the counseling and guidance programs offered in high schools across both states.





BY THE NUMBERS  
2018-2022

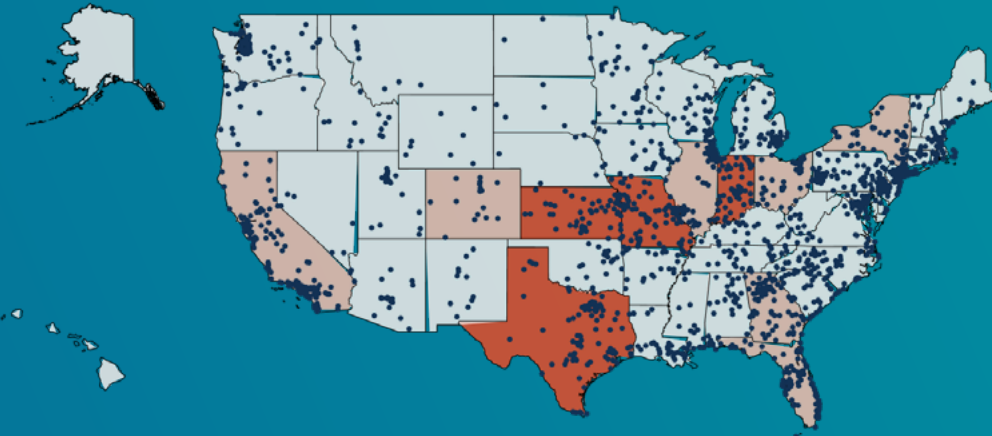
94,200

COMPLETIONS OF THE  
AGILE WORK PROFILER (AWP)



39% of individuals who completed the AWP in 2022  
went on to use the Career Explorer Tools.

GEOGRAPHIC REACH OF AWP



50  
STATES

3,555  
U.S. CITIES

125  
COUNTRIES

110

TV, RADIO, NEWSPAPER,  
AND ONLINE STORIES



250+  
EVENTS

88+

PARTNERS  
adopted Agilities into their  
program/curriculum.

20+

RESEARCH PROJECTS  
with learners, education  
institutions, workforce development  
organizations, and states.



# Foundation Story



In 1988, ten years after founding DeBruce Grain, Inc., Paul DeBruce established The DeBruce Foundation as his way to give back to the community. Over the decades, The Foundation has been a generous supporter of many worthy causes in the Kansas City metro and beyond.

Since 2010, The Foundation has been supported by DeBruce Companies, a private investment firm managing a diverse portfolio of private equity and other asset-class investments across a broad range of industries, including biotechnology, energy, manufacturing, technology, and real estate.

Mr. DeBruce assembled a board of directors and a team of experts to identify transformative opportunities for charitable investment in the decades to come, reimagining philanthropy and making an impact through practical tools and systemic change.

*Following is a timeline of mission milestones in relation to career literacy resources across 2017-2022.*

## Community Contributions

- DeBruce Center at the University of Kansas
- Gates of Paradise promised gift to Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art by Paul DeBruce and Linda Woodsmall-DeBruce
- Civic Contributions – Donations to KC COVID Response & Relief Fund and Leading Funder for KCPD Body Cameras
- Paul and Linda DeBruce Hall at the Kansas City Art Institute
- Children’s Mercy Research Institute (CMRI): Genomic Answers for Kids Project

## MILESTONES

In Recent Years

Today, The DeBruce Foundation focuses on expanding pathways to economic growth and opportunity. To prepare individuals and close workforce gaps, we partner in designing and deploying innovative resources for all ages, unlocking their potential to find new career pathways.

### 2017-18



- Established mission as “Expanding pathways to economic growth & opportunity”
- Developed the Agile Work Profiler®

### 2019



- Launched publicly the Agile Work Profiler® and the Career Explorer Tools®
- Released first market research findings

### 2020

- Launched interactive career programs: Grad Gift, Draw Your Future with Agilities, and vShips
- Achieved 20K Agile Work Profiler® completions

### 2021



- Released “Adult Higher Education’s Lessons Learned” report
- Released research that found gaps exist between youth career expectations and their career readiness
- Launched the new Agilities.org

### 2022



- Released first-of-its-kind Employment Empowerment report
- Entered statewide adoption of the Agile Work Profiler® with Indiana
- Achieved 94K+ Agile Work Profiler® completions





With partners, we make intentional investments for impact.



**Alignment**

Can this partnership help meet mutual missions?



**Access**

Can this partnership provide access to key audiences The Foundation intends to serve?



**Acceleration**

Can this partnership increase effectiveness to meet goals?



**Accountability**

Can this partnership measure for impact?



**Allocation**

Can this partnership accomplish these things efficiently?

Together, we can expand career pathways for everyone.



Individuals are economically empowered when they increase their career literacy and network strength. Join us! Here's how:

- Access resources at [Agilities.org](https://Agilities.org)
- Share what YOU are doing; connect with us at [info@DeBruce.org](mailto:info@DeBruce.org)
- Sign up for our newsletter at [DeBruce.org](https://DeBruce.org)
- And ... stay tuned on how we will be celebrating Career Development month each November!
- Follow us on social media [@DeBruceFound](https://twitter.com/DeBruceFound)



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code or visiting DeBruce.org



Thank you for all you do to  
expand career pathways!



Expanding Pathways  
to Economic Growth  
& Opportunity

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