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Press Release

Herb Kohl Philanthropies Renews Its Support for M³ Smart Start with \$300,000 Gift

Program Helps MPS Graduates Make Successful Transition to College at MATC or UWM

By [Milwaukee Public Schools](#) - Jul 29th, 2025 10:20 am

MILWAUKEE — M³ (pronounced “M-Cubed”), the education partnership uniting [Milwaukee Public Schools](#) (MPS), [Milwaukee Area Technical College](#) (MATC), and the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee (UWM), is proud to announce renewed support from [Herb Kohl Philanthropies](#) for its Smart Start program.

This three-year, \$300,000 grant, distributed in \$100,000 annual installments, will expand and strengthen Smart Start’s proven efforts to ensure graduating MPS seniors successfully transition into college at MATC or UWM.

Smart Start combats “summer melt,” which happens when students accepted to college fail to enroll, by providing coaching, peer engagement opportunities, and transition events throughout the summer and fall. Participating students receive up to \$500 in scholarships while building skills and relationships that support their long-term success.

Since its launch, Smart Start has grown more than sixfold, from 106 students in its first year to 641 in 2024. Retention data underscores the program’s impact:

- At UWM, 95.6% of Fall 2024 Smart Start participants continued into Spring 2025, compared with 86.1% of other MPS students.
- At MATC, 74.7% of participants persisted to the spring semester, compared with 68.9% of their peers.

“Smart Start reflects the kind of thoughtful, student-centered work we’re proud to support,” said [JoAnne Anton](#), President and CEO of Herb Kohl Philanthropies. “This collaborative model helps young people navigate one of life’s most important transitions.”

The announcement comes as Smart Start gears up for key summer events, including:

- July 31 – MPS Summer College and Career Expo
- August 1 – Smart Start Social at UWM Student Union (12:00-1:00 pm).

Media are invited to attend and see firsthand how students are preparing for their first semester of college with the support of success coaches and community partners.

For more information about Smart Start, visit uwm.edu/m-cubed/programs/smartstart.

NOTE: This press release was submitted to Urban Milwaukee and was not written by an Urban Milwaukee writer. While it is believed to be reliable, Urban Milwaukee does not guarantee its accuracy or completeness.

Mentioned in This Press Release

People: [JoAnne Anton](#)

Organizations: [Herb Kohl Philanthropies](#)

Government: [Milwaukee Area Technical College](#), [Milwaukee Public Schools](#)