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NISWONGER FOUNDATION

2014-2015 ANNUAL REPORT

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“OUR PAST SUCCESSES ARE THE...

inspiration

OUR DREAMS FOR THE FUTURE
ARE THE MOTIVATION.”

-Scott M. Niswonger
Chairman and Founder



A MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIRMAN AND FOUNDER



My journey has offered many opportunities to meet individuals who have lived extraordinary lives. I have drawn personal inspiration from learning or observing how seemingly impossible goals and dreams have been realized. For example, if you have been privileged to live long enough, you have, likely, been asked the question:

“Where were you when you watched Neil Armstrong take that first step on the moon?” Well, I can tell you that as a young man, enamored with aviation, I will remember that day. My feelings ranged from disbelief to sheer amazement. Neil Armstrong’s own words best reflect what was accomplished: “I was elated, ecstatic and extremely surprised that we were successful.” It was years later before I really understood the enormity of what we had witnessed that day. Simply stated, inspiration turned to motivation, and a near impossible dream became reality.

Recently, one of our newest Scholars, an aspiring engineering major, accompanied me on a visit to my alma mater, Purdue University. I shared with him the rest of my Neil Armstrong story. As fellow Purdue graduates, I had the privilege of knowing Neil Armstrong. One, warm, Florida evening, as we stood on a dock talking, the ocean was to his back. And, with much the same amazement that I felt as that young man, watching him take that first step on the moon, I began to observe a full moon rising, in all its brilliance, over Neil’s right shoulder. I said, “Man! You have to turn around and see this view!” He glanced behind him, and then turned back with a knowing grin. I ask him, “How do you describe that experience?” The smile became wider as he leaned in closely to me. With every syllable emphasized, he spoke one word...“A-MAZ-ING!” Neil’s life on this planet ended prematurely, two years ago, with what was supposed to be a “routine surgery...”

While I am pretty sure I will never experience a walk on the moon, there are, most definitely, moments in my life that have convinced me that inspiration turned to motivation can lead to the fulfillment of A-MAZ-ING dreams. Watching the work of the Niswonger Foundation has led to many of those moments for me. This year’s Annual Report highlights some of these impressive accomplishments.

The Investing in Innovation (i3) grant came to an end this year. This work left an impressive mark of accomplishment on 30 high schools in Northeast Tennessee. Notably, the grant served 51,862 students, in 15 school systems, setting them on course toward post-secondary education and career paths. College and career counseling, distance learning, online instruction, and dual enrollment opportunities were made available. Math, science and robotics labs were equipped, providing students

with a focus on “real world” job expectations. A plethora of professional development opportunities were made available for educators.

Importantly, when the grant began, only a handful of our high schools offered the opportunity for Advanced Placement (AP) instruction. Now, 100% of students have the opportunity to take multiple AP courses. Most of these are offered on site. A wide selection, however, is available online to ensure an “even playing field” for all students. The 100%

availability of AP courses in the Niswonger Consortium schools compares to 48% across the State of Tennessee. As an overall indication of the success of these college and career-ready efforts, Northeast Tennessee students raised the average ACT score by a statistically significant percentage higher than the rest of the State. Now, I would call that “A-MAZ-ING!”

Speaking of inspiration, I point, with pride, to the Niswonger Scholars. With 20 current Scholars, 5 newly selected Scholars, and 57 Alumni, this program

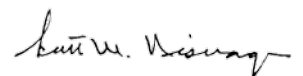
promises to build a strong and impressive network of leaders to guide the work of this region. This year’s report highlights our 7 Alumni who are serving as public school educators in Tennessee. Looks like the Foundation’s mission “to create opportunities for individual and community growth through education...” has been an inspiration to this exceptional group of dedicated individuals. Likewise, we are proud of our Alumni who have already returned to pursue careers and leadership roles in business, health care, college professorships, non-profit management, and engineering. The network of these Alumni promises to have a meaningful impact on this region.

When I think of the ultimate dream for the Niswonger Foundation, I see our work providing the opportunity for every child in Northeast Tennessee to achieve the greatest dreams they can possibly dream for their lives – to take their personal “step on the moon.” My thoughts just flashed to my high school study hall, where a history book was used to camouflage *Flying* magazine. Imagination, motivation, and big dreams do change lives. They certainly changed mine.

Through education, I believe we can inspire every child to live a life guided by these words from Neil Armstrong:

*“I believe every human has a finite number of heartbeats.
I don’t intend to waste any of mine.”*

Scott M. Niswonger

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Scott M. Niswonger".

Chairman and Founder

LEAVING OUR MARK WITH SCHOOL PARTNERSHIPS



This Annual Report is a celebration of the commendable accomplishments of our school partnership program. A significant mark has been left on our region's 30 high schools by the work of the Investing in Innovation Grant (i3), which concluded this year. This \$21 million investment in the school systems of Northeast Tennessee was made possible through the U.S. Department of Education; with matching funds from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation,

Rural School and Community Trust, J.P. Morgan Foundation and Scott M. Niswonger.

While it is impossible to adequately describe the impact of this five-year program, following are some examples of the efforts that have left our mark on educational opportunities for our students.

**...\$21 MILLION
DOLLAR INVESTMENT...**

Our Success Story

► Forty-eight (48) rigorous online courses were established to ensure that size or location of high school was not the determining factor for students' ability to select from broad curricular offerings. Enrollment increased from 426 in 2010-11, to 3,279 in 2014-15, reflecting a 670% increase in participation.

► All schools have distance learning equipment, providing potential participation in any class taught in the 30 high schools. Distance learning was piloted in some form by all of the schools over the 5-year period. A 47% increase in enrollment was recorded.

► Advanced Placement (AP) instructional opportunities became available to 100% of students in the 30 high schools. Ninety percent of schools offered AP onsite. All schools provided an array of online opportunities. This compares to 48% of Tennessee students who have access to AP instruction in their high schools. There were 384 teachers supported to attend AP training.

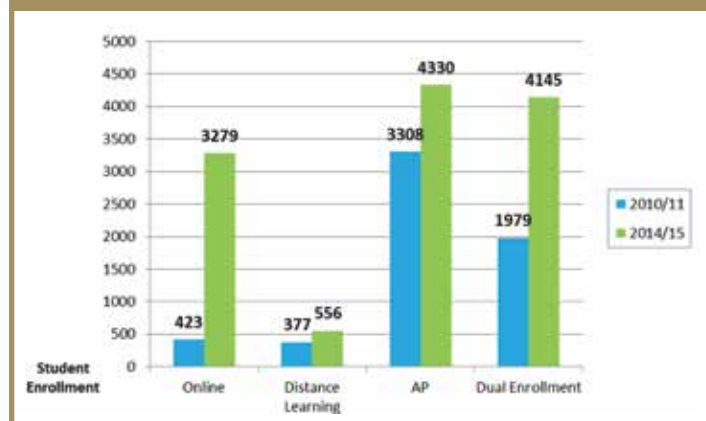
► Seven post-secondary institutions became partners in supporting a focus on dual enrollment opportunities. Students participating in dual enrollment increased by 109.4% during the five-year grant period.

► Assistance was provided to all regional high schools interested in implementing a Seamless Alignment and Integrated Learning Support (SAILS) program. The SAILS program provides learning support classes for students scoring below 19 on the ACT mathematics examination. In 2014-15, 1,339 students enrolled in SAILS math, with a 90% success rate. Successful students were eligible to start college level math courses in Fall 2015.

► The professional development needs of educators were identified and supported. Professional development was designed and provided in focus areas such as AP instruction; online and distance learning instruction; and for science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) teachers. Career technical education academies and a college and career counseling convening were provided. In summer 2015, alone, 22 professional development opportunities were attended by over 1400 educators.

► Nine college and career counselors were provided to support students in these rural Northeast Tennessee high schools. Opportunities were provided for college visits, individual and group counseling and informational sessions, assistance with financial aid and admissions applications, college selection and career choices, and transitioning to a post-secondary school.

STUDENT ENROLLMENTS INCREASED IN ALL COURSE TYPES



Sustaining Our Successes ~The Story Continues

The Niswonger Foundation has received recognition from the U. S. Department of Education for the design and implementation of a model sustainability plan to ensure that the successes of the Investing in Innovation grant are ongoing. The key to the successful implementation of this plan is to work in partnership. Following is a listing of the grant's successful programs for which plans have been made for sustainability.

- Fundamental to the continued success of these projects is the partnership and excellent working relationships between, and among, the school systems in Northeast Tennessee and the Niswonger Foundation.
- Online instruction will be sustained in partnership with the Niswonger Foundation and the Consortium school systems. The established technology will, also, provide an opportunity for program growth, such as the potential for educator professional development.
- The installed distance learning network will provide ongoing opportunity for shared instruction between, and among, all Consortium schools.
- A strong network of AP instructors is available for ongoing support of AP instruction. Additionally, the online courses will continue to be made available to all students. The Niswonger Foundation is committed to continuing to support additional AP training.
- Professional development for educators will remain a focus of the Niswonger Foundation. Sustainability funds for this effort have been committed by Chairman and Founder, Scott M. Niswonger. Decisions regarding areas of need will be determined by Consortium members.
- The work of the college and career counseling effort will be sustained in partnership with the Care Foundation of America. This Foundation is providing funding to support the new NiswongerCARE program that is described in more detail in this report.

NiswongerCare Sustains Post-Secondary and Career Advisement

Without a partner, the Niswonger Foundation and the school systems of Northeast Tennessee would have been unable to sustain the post-secondary and career advisement that was supported through the i3 grant funds. The Niswonger Foundation sought a partner to join in this effort, and received a grant from the Care Foundation of America to sustain this work. This partnership has resulted in a two-year 1.3 million dollar grant. Tom Davenport, Chairman of the Board of the Care Foundation, immediately understood the need for sustaining a focus on post-secondary education, commenting, "Navigating the college or technical school admissions process is not easy, particularly for a first generation college-bound student and his or her family. It is important to provide the opportunity for students to have advisement to assist with questions regarding college and career choices. We believe we will produce a model that can be scaled across the State of Tennessee."

NiswongerCARE program was initiated for the 2015-16 school year. This program serves 31 high schools in the First Congressional District and will impact nearly 30,000 high school students. Following, is a listing of the NiswongerCARE leadership and Advisors .

Denise Arnold, Director Amy French, Associate Director Anita Kilbourne-Greer, Associate Director	
ADVISORS	
Caroline Baird Allison Eastridge Nellie Greer Lucas Hitechew Jordan Lovetere	Amanda Murr Hannah Norris Sarah Patton Joe Story
COLLEGE INTERNS/ADVISORS	
Chris Burns Jessica Crosby Kevin Hyatt	Bailey Mays Claire McCarter Kaitlin Norton



NiswongerCare Advisors and Staff

SCHOLARSHIP AND LEADERSHIP

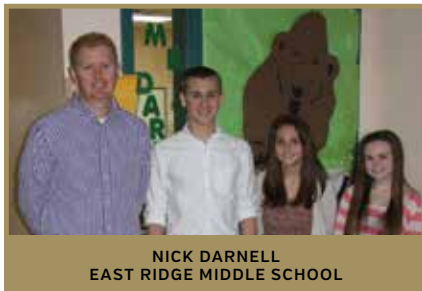
Leaving our Mark with Scholarship and Leadership Our Niswonger Scholars Story

The Foundation is leaving our mark in this region with the Niswonger Scholars. We know of no other Scholarship and Leadership program like ours in the United States. Niswonger Scholars are selected through a nomination process that seeks to identify the region's best and brightest future leaders. They are given the opportunity to attend the college or university that will best prepare them for success in their field of study, while participating in our four-year leadership program. Through an emphasis on leadership, business management, community service and ethical decision making, the Scholars are provided travel, training, internships, and personalized support to become model leaders and citizens of the world.



ALEX SMYTH
WEST GREENE HIGH SCHOOL

What makes our program unique to all other scholarships is that the goal is to identify and develop leaders for Northeast Tennessee. These students commit to returning, within seven years, to Northeast Tennessee to work in their chosen career one year for each year they receive our scholarship. The plan is that by enabling these students to pursue their academic passion and by cultivating their leadership abilities, they will be committed to returning to their "roots" and being catalysts for the growth and improvement of their communities.



NICK DARNELL
EAST RIDGE MIDDLE SCHOOL

While we instill the belief that one person's life can have a great impact, the strength of our Alumni Network is rapidly growing. We currently have 57 Alumni of the program. These Alumni Scholars are seeing, firsthand, what happens when greater challenges are faced together. Examples of Alumni involvement include formal and informal alumni meetings, serving as mentors to undergraduate Scholars, assisting with internship and research placements, and presentations at Scholars training. Importantly, the majority of the final selection committee for new Scholars is made up of Alumni. This ensures their support for the success of the new Scholars and the commitment to select those who will bring more strength to the network. This year, one of our newest Scholars was nominated by an Alumni Scholar...and the circle continues!



MEREDITH STEVANS
MORRISTOWN EAST HIGH SCHOOL

Alumni are taking leadership roles in many career paths. These include medicine, business, nursing, public health, pharmacy, engineering, and non-profit man-

agement. Fundamental to the mission of the Niswonger Foundation, we now have six public school teachers and one school counselor leaving their mark on the lives of children. We are pleased to share reflections from a few of these teachers. Nick Darnell, is an eighth grade teacher at East Ridge Middle School in Hamblen County. He was named Regional Teacher of the Year, in 2015, and was appointed, by Tennessee Governor Bill Haslam, to serve on the first Teacher Cabinet. Reflecting on his experiences, Nick states: "Each day



TAYLOR GRINDSTAFF
CHUCKEY DOAK HIGH SCHOOL

I walk into my classroom I know the amazing power I have to influence my students for the better and help them not only learn the history of our great nation but also how to be good citizens." Most of these Alumni are serving in rural school settings. Lillie Seal teaches at Northwest Elementary in Cocke County. The influence she hopes to have as a teacher is apparent in her words: "I am excited to be able to help my children understand why getting a good education is so important. I am particularly enjoying the opportunity to share my love for learning with students in my rural community." Alex Smyth, mathematics teacher at West Greene High School, has a vision for preparing students for a successful future.



LILLIE SEAL
NORTHWEST ELEMENTARY

"What I want to instill in them is that if they do not embrace learning, so many decisions have already been made for them. I want to help them believe that they are more than a test score - that learning is something that transcends the academic world and extends to everything around us." Natalie Neas Coleman was named 2013-14 Teacher of the Year, at Joe Shafer Middle School. "When I think about why I teach, I think about the teachers who made the pathway for me by inspiring me to love learning and by equipping me to achieve my goals. I teach because of what my teachers did for me, and what I

love about teaching is getting to see students grow and get excited about learning." These Alumni are joined by Meredith Wachs Stevans, mathematics teacher at Morristown East High School; Brandi Ricker Shelnett, chemistry teacher at Greeneville High School; and Taylor Ashby Grindstaff, counselor at Chuckey-Doak High School. The Niswonger Foundation honors each of these individuals who are living our mission "to create individual and community growth through education..."

There are 82 individuals who hold the distinction of being Niswonger Scholars. Our twenty current Scholars represent nine areas of study in nine different universities. Five new Scholars have recently been selected as the Class of 2020.



NATALIE COLEMAN
JOE SHAFER MIDDLE SCHOOL



Our Current Niswonger Scholars

CURRENT NISWONGER SCHOLARS

FRESHMEN

- Courtney Johnson (Maryville College)
- Morgan Thomas (Clemson University)
- Zachary Ward (University of Tennessee)
- Matthew Widener (East Tennessee State University)
- Trenton Yount (University of Tennessee)

SOPHOMORES

- Hope Adkins (Carson Newman University)
- McKenzie Reynolds (University of Tennessee)
- Alora Ricker (Milligan College)
- Dillan Shults (Tennessee Technological University)
- Madeline Standbridge (University of Tennessee)

JUNIORS

- Samuel Brashears (Wake Forest University)
- Matthew Grimm (University of Tennessee)
- Dustin Howser (Vanderbilt University)
- Raini Rowenhorst (East Tennessee State University)
- Katie Shields (University of Tennessee)

SENIORS

- Gage Armstrong (East Tennessee State University)
- Nathaniel "Trey" Dodson (Vanderbilt University)
- Ivory Shelton (Wake Forest University)
- Matthew Sheppard (Clemson University)
- Richard Vradenburgh (Tennessee Technological University)

STUDIES ABROAD

- Sam Brashears – 2014 – London
- Trey Dodson – 2014 – Switzerland
- Lillie Seal – 2014 – France and Spain
- Ivory Shelton - 2014 Israel

INTERNSHIPS

- Trey Dodson – 2014 – Paramount Studios
- Trey Dodson – 2014 – Huron Consulting Group, Chicago, IL
- Matthew Sheppard – 2014 – Siemans of Johnson City
- Matthew Sheppard – 2014-2015
- Student Co-op at General Electric in Morristown, TN
- Francisco Ochoa-Vargas – 2014 – Merser Consulting in Atlanta, GA
- Richard Vradenburgh – 2014 – STEM Center at Tennessee Tech
- Trey Dodson – 2015 – London
- Jordan Frye – 2014/2015 – Helen Ross McNabb Center
- Jordan Frye – 2015 – Public Defender’s Community Law Office at UT
- Katie Shields – 2015 - Prewitt’s Berry Farm in Georgia
- Trey Dodson – 2015 – MediaXchange in Knoxville, TN
- Trey Dodson – 2015 - Human Capital consultant For Deloitte in San Francisco, California
- Dustin Howser – 2015 – Domtar Corporation, Kingsport, TN
- Dillan Shults – 2015 – Jarden Zinc, Greeneville, TN
- Matthew Grimm – 2015 – East Tennessee State University, Dr. Robert V. Schoborg

RESEARCH FELLOWSHIPS

- Sam Brashears – 2015
- Dr. Kim Shapiro in the Physics Department at Wake Forest University
- Dustin Howser - 2015-2016 Biomechanics and Assistive Technologies Lab at Vanderbilt University
- Richard Vradenburgh - 2015 University of Tennessee-Chattanooga with Dr. John Graef on differential equations/number theory
- Matthew Grimm - 2015 East Tennessee State University under Dr. Robert V. Schoborg
- Gage Armstrong – 2015 East Tennessee State University, Quillen College of Medicine under Dr. Donald Hoover

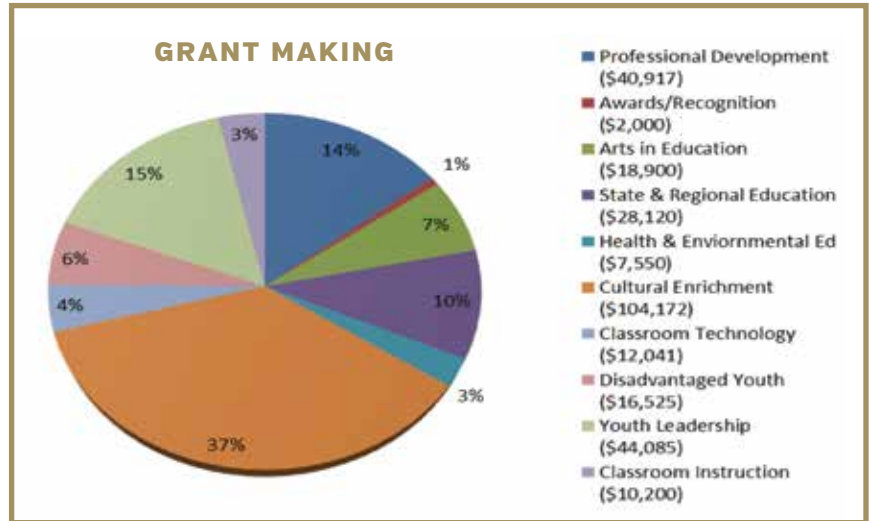
GRANT MAKING

The primary areas of focus for the Niswonger Foundation are School Partnerships and Scholarship and Leadership. Another important part of the Foundation's work is the portion of the budget that is dedicated to grant making. Up to ten percent of the total annual operating budget can be used by the Niswonger Foundation to assist with important projects that are presented through proposals from schools, school districts, and other not-for-profit agencies. As compared to the sustained work of the two major programs, grant making provides for exploration into creative school activities, start-up programs, one-time unique educational experiences, etc. Over the fourteen-year history of the Niswonger Foundation nearly two million dollars has been provided through this grant program.

To date, more than 450 grants have been supported. This year, 59 projects received funding. These projects varied broadly in theme and size. Several overarching themes, however, emerged. Cultural enrichment grants were a major focus of this year's work. Providing student leadership opportunities and professional development for educators, also topped the list of areas that were supported. The mission statement serves as the guide in the final selection of the grants to be funded: "Creating opportunities for indi-

vidual and community growth through education and other sustainable projects."

The graph summarizes, by categories, the 59 grants that were funded in this annual reporting period.



Our staff has taken the lead in educational reform at the regional, state and national level in 2014-15. Some recent examples include presentations at the following:

- Investing in Innovation (i3) National Project Director's Meeting
- Battelle for Kids – Rural Forum
- Tennessee Alliance for Continuing Higher Education
- Tennessee School Counselor Administrator Leadership Institute
- Tennessee College Access and Success Network
- Skills USA
- i3 Webinar on Sustaining the Most Successful Strategies of an i3 Grant
- Rural Summit, sponsored by Battelle for Kids and Niswonger Foundation
- Tennessee Counselor Association
- Southeastern Regional Education Board GO Alliance
- Leadership Tennessee
- SCORE Prize Site Visitation Team
- Tennessee State Board of Education
- Southern Legislative Conference of the Council of State Government
- More than 25 professional development programs for the region's educators

Regional, State and National Initiatives

While the work of the Niswonger Foundation is regionally placed in Northeast Tennessee, the staff is committed to having a voice in support of education beyond this service area. Our desire is to use what we learn to improve educational opportunities for all Tennesseans and to be an influence across the nation.

Our efforts to impact education at the State level are represented by current participation on boards including the Tennessee College Access and Success Network (TCASN), the Board of Directors of the State Collaborative on Reforming Education (SCORE), the SCORE Steering Committee, The Governor's Transformational Leadership Advisory Committee, and the Tennessee Independent Colleges and Universities Association (TICUA). Niswonger Scholar Alumni, Nick Darnell, serves on the Governor's Teacher Cabinet.

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION

June 30, 2015

ASSETS

Restricted Cash	\$ 428,972
Federal Grant Funds Receivable	404,531
I-3 Grant Receivable	21,241,283
Investments	9,312,954
Prepaid Expenses and Other Assets	600
Student Loans Receivable	70,290
Collections	101,861

Total Assets **\$ 31,560,491**

LIABILITIES

Bank Overdraft	\$ 99,170
Accounts Payable and other Accrued Liabilities	322,497
Line of Credit	332,843
I-3 Grant Payable	21,241,283
Demand Notes Payable to Primary Benefactor	1,136,826

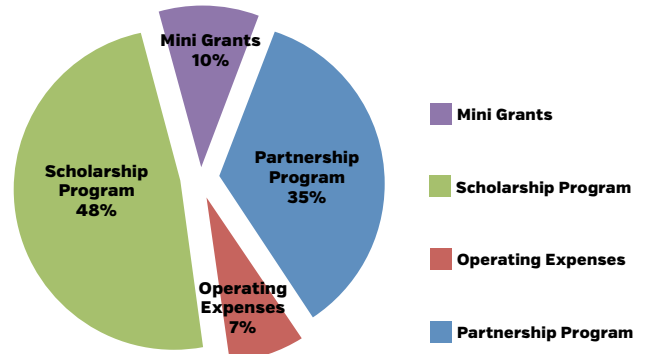
Total Liabilities **\$ 18,362,050**

NET ASSETS
Unrestricted **\$ 8,427,872**

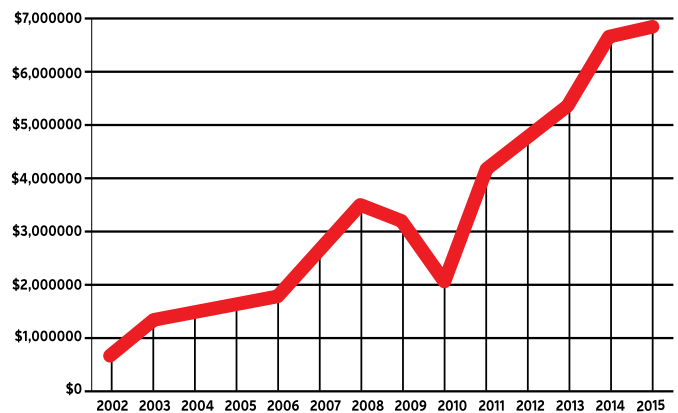
**TOTAL LIABILITIES AND
NET ASSETS** **\$ 31,560,491***

**The Niswonger Foundation distributed \$ 6,836,053.00 to educational programs and scholarship awards in fiscal year 2015.*

NISWONGER FOUNDATION (EXCLUDES FEDERAL I3 GRANT FUNDS)



NISWONGER FOUNDATION FUNDING HISTORY (INCLUDES FEDERAL I3 GRANT FUNDS)



CONTRIBUTIONS TO SUPPORT OUR WORK

During 2014-2015 the following individuals or organizations provided contributions to assist in expanding our educational programs and activities.

Brotherton Foundation
John Abe and Vickie Teague
AT&T Employee Contributions
Corporate Giving Program
JP Morgan Foundation
Rural School and Community Trust
Our Consortium School Systems

AN OPERATING FOUNDATION

The Niswonger Foundation was founded by businessman and philanthropist Scott M. Niswonger. Unlike most private foundations, the Niswonger Foundation is not a traditional grant-making foundation. It is an operating foundation with its own programs and projects. Although a percentage of its operating funds go towards grant making, the majority of funds go into the Foundation's two primary programs – a scholarship and leadership program for selected college students and a partnership program for schools.

BOARD AND STAFF

OFFICERS AND STAFF

SCOTT M. NISWONGER
Chairman and Founder

DR. NANCY DISHNER
President and CEO

NIKKI L. NISWONGER
Secretary

BARBARA BATES
Executive Assistant

ALAN LEVINE
Board Member

KATHY O'DELL
Office Manager

NISWONGER FOUNDATION INVESTING IN INNOVATION (i3) GRANT

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Executive Director

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Director of College and Career Counseling

DR. BLAIR HENLEY
Director of Technology

ROBBIE MITCHELL
Director of Professional Development

LARRY NEAS
Compliance Officer

KATHY O'DELL
Bookkeeper

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STEM Coordinator

ROSE MARY KITZMILLER
Distance Learning Coordinator

CAROLYN MCPHERSON
MARSHA OTTEM
SAMATHA DEBORD
Advance Placement Coordinator

DALE SCHNEITMAN
Dual Enrollment Coordinator

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DONNELL GOODE
KRISTI JOHNSON
MELISSA OVERBAY
JULINA PYANOE
SHAWN STEWART
ANITA KILBOURNE-GREER
ANNA DAVIS
BREE NELSON
DEREK FERGUSON

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DR. JANIE SNYDER
Johnson City Schools

SCOTT BENSON
Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation

DR. DENISE BROWN
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Northeast Tennessee Consortium

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Tusculum College

MANNEY MOORE
Cocke County Schools

DR. JEFF MOORHOUSE
Hamblen County Schools

SCOTT M. NISWONGER
Niswonger Foundation

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CHARLOTTE BRITTON
STEVE STARNES
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Johnson County Schools

BRETT TURNER
Tennessee Department of Education

DR. KEVIN WARD
Carter County Schools

JAMIE WOODSON
State Collaborative on Reforming Education

DR. JUBAL YENNIE
Sullivan County Schools

ERIN O'HARA
TN DOE Assistant Commissioner





DEDICATION



*The 2014-2015 Niswonger Foundation
Annual Report is Dedicated to
Those Providing Twenty-one Million
Dollars in Support of College and Career
Readiness in Northeast Tennessee through
the Niswonger Foundation's
Investing in Innovation Grant (i3)*

**United States Department of Education
Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation
Rural School and Community Trust
J.P. Morgan Foundation
Scott M. Niswonger**

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