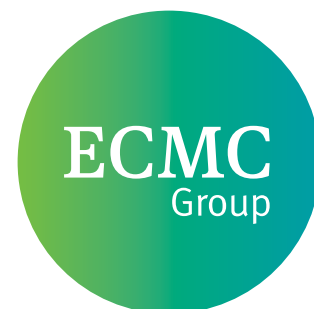


# ?QUESTION THE QUO®

Elevating the Student Voice





# QUESTION THE QUO®

As a nonprofit focused on helping students succeed, ECMC Group is in a unique position to help students navigate the path to and through postsecondary education. Given its decades of work supporting a myriad of solutions for students and families as they determine their education path after high school and beyond, we observed a lack of knowledge and understanding of options beyond the four-year degree—a path that works for some but not all.

To meet the need, ECMC Group developed a grassroots public awareness campaign, Question The Quo, that was grounded in national data from high school students and was collected over several years. The research uncovered a lack of information about the many postsecondary options that can lead to a successful career but also highlighted a multitude of opportunities for assisting teens in planning their futures. The campaign included a multi-pronged approach designed to elevate student voices around the need for resources and support during this pivotal time.

Visit [QuestionTheQuo.org](https://QuestionTheQuo.org) to learn more.



In 2019, ECMC Group developed a public awareness campaign designed to empower high school students to take the education and career path that is right for them.



## 2020

The campaign came to life in early 2020 as concept testing found the “Question The Quo” messaging resonated with high school students. Having identified a gap in research from Gen Z teens, ECMC Group began surveying high school students in January to assess their thoughts about their future education and career.

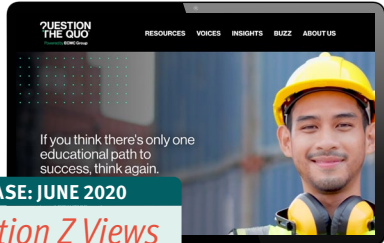
After the COVID-19 pandemic upended the world, the team decided to conduct a second round of research midyear to determine whether the pandemic had influenced students’ plans for the future.

The campaign was publicly launched in June and included media outreach, paid and organic social media campaigns, a dedicated campaign microsite and outreach to education and workforce industry stakeholders.

**MARCH 2020**  
COVID-19 pandemic upended U.S. education system

**MAY 2020**  
Second survey of Gen Z teens (initial COVID-19 impact analysis)

**JUNE 2020**  
Public launch of Question The Quo campaign



**PRESS RELEASE: JUNE 2020**  
*Generation Z Views Traditional College Path As Old School*

**JANUARY 2020**  
Concept testing (identified initial campaign elements)

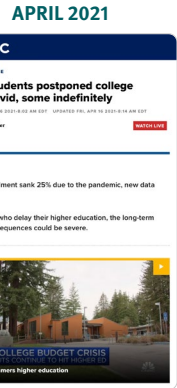
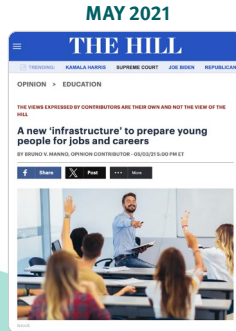
**FEBRUARY 2020**  
First survey of Gen Z teens (pre-COVID-19 pandemic)

## 2021

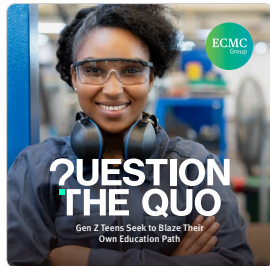
In 2021, ECMC Group began to capture valuable longitudinal data about Gen Z’s perceptions of education and careers. The research was taken a step further by connecting to the pandemic-driven shifts in the workforce and asking students whether they were adjusting their plans accordingly.

An Instagram campaign featuring young adults who shared a multitude of views about their education journey was launched to reach teens “where they were.” Resources also were provided to education and workforce leaders to inform their constituencies about the changing wants and needs of the future workforce.

**JANUARY 2021**  
Second annual Gen Z survey (third overall)



**SEPTEMBER 2021**  
Fourth Gen Z survey examined awareness of pandemic-driven workforce shortages



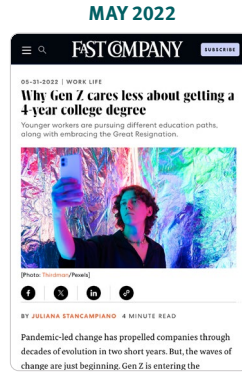
## 2022

As Question The Quo entered its third year, ECMC Group continued the annual survey and also added a second survey and focus groups to gather insights from low-income, BIPOC and first-generation students.

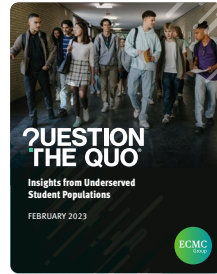
A TikTok campaign featuring several young adults who each took a unique path to their career was launched. Pairing this approach with participation at several high-profile events with targeted media outreach enabled ECMC Group to expand the reach of the campaign.

2022

**JANUARY 2022**  
Third annual Gen Z survey (fifth overall)



**MARCH 2022**



**SEPTEMBER 2022**  
• Sixth national survey, which focused on the wants and needs of underserved students (defined as first-gen, BIPOC and low-income high school students)  
• Conducted 10 focus groups of underserved students



**Generation COVID: Record Numbers of Youth Opt Out of College, Work**

**NOVEMBER 2022**  
TikTok influencer ambassador campaign began

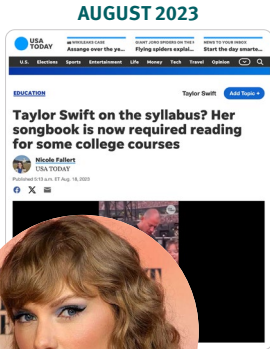
2023

**JANUARY 2023**  
Fourth annual Gen Z survey (seventh overall)



**MARCH 2023**  
Three presentations and booth at SXSW EDU

**JULY 2023**  
American School Counselor Association booth activation



2024

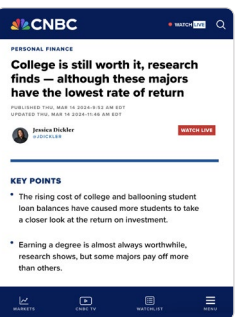
**SEPTEMBER 2023**  
Booth at Congressional Black Caucus Foundation Annual Legislative conference and Congressional Hispanic Caucus Institute Leadership conference in D.C.

**JANUARY 2024**  
• Findings referenced in congressional testimony during a hearing on “Preparing Students for Success in the Skills-Based Economy”  
• Fifth annual Gen Z survey (eighth overall)

**FEBRUARY 2024**  
Launched ad campaign targeting parents and counselors



**MARCH 2024**



**APRIL 2024**  
• 1,000+ media mentions in five years  
• Reached 1M video views on social content  
• Featured in *Apprentice Nation*, a book by Ryan Craig

**Question The Quo at a glance:**  
**MORE THAN 1,000 NEWS STORIES**  
**40 NATIONAL AND INDUSTRY AWARDS EARNED**

**JANUARY 2024**  
Released “Student Voices” docuseries

# Empowering Gen Z Teens to Take the Education and Career Path That Is Right for Them

Over the past five years, the Question The Quo campaign has gained momentum and interest with a variety of stakeholders and audiences. From educators and policymakers to high school students, parents and counselors, the multi-year effort has successfully elevated the wants and needs of teens that had been previously unstudied. Thousands of student insights have been used to educate and inform a multitude of audiences about the many education paths that can lead to a successful career while dispelling the stigmas about paths other than the four-year degree. Tactics include earned media coverage, panel discussions at large-scale events, outreach to target constituencies, social media amplification and more. Survey findings have been featured in more than 1,000 media articles, and social media interest in Question The Quo content has increased exponentially (tens of thousands of views per month).

We continue to engage in active conversations about the campaign, data and potential partnerships to better address student needs.

## ABOUT ECMC GROUP

ECMC Group is a nonprofit corporation focused on helping students succeed by creating, providing and investing in innovative educational opportunities. Headquartered in Minneapolis, ECMC Group and its family of companies are focused on advancing educational opportunities through financial tools and services; support for postsecondary access, persistence and completion; and impactful and mission-aligned funding for innovative programs to help students achieve their academic and professional goals.



[www.questionthequo.org](http://www.questionthequo.org)



[www.ecmcgroup.org](http://www.ecmcgroup.org)

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