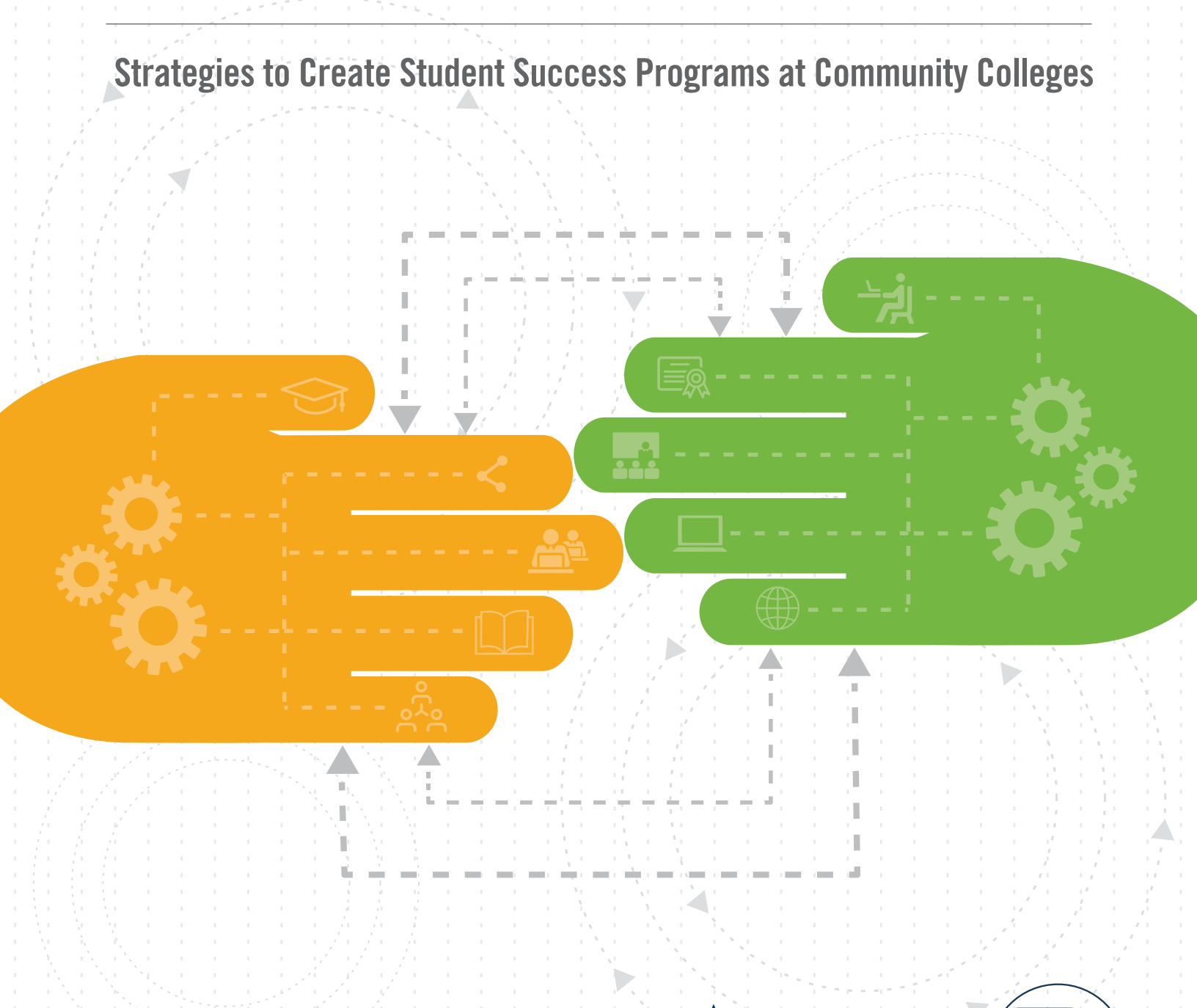


THE PROGRESS OF LATINOS IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Strategies to Create Student Success Programs at Community Colleges



ACCT

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ACCT is a non-profit educational organization of governing boards, representing more than 6,500 elected and appointed trustees who govern over 1,100 community, technical, and junior colleges in the United States and beyond. These community professionals, business officials, public policy leaders, and leading citizens offer their time and talents to serve on the governing boards of some of the nation's most innovative higher education institutions and make decisions that affect more than 13 million students annually. For more information about ACCT, go to www.acct.org.

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INTRODUCTION

Although the United States is touted as a country where anyone could be successful regardless of social class or national background, upward social mobility is hard to attain.

Less than one in 10 children born into poverty will reach the top of the income distribution.¹ For many individuals, postsecondary education has historically been a way out of poverty. A college degree holder is 5.3 times more likely to experience upward social mobility than a person who does not complete college.² This is because both associate's and bachelor's degrees are linked to higher earnings and job stability.³ However, a report by the Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce (CEW) asserts that the U.S. will experience a shortage of college-educated workers by the end of this decade.⁴ By 2018, we will have 46.8 million job openings, of which 13.8 million (30 percent) will require some college or an associate's degree and another 16 million (33 percent) will require at least a bachelor's degree. According to CEW's projections, the U.S. will fall short of workers with at least an associate's degree by three million individuals.

To increase the number of college degree holders, officials at all levels of government and philanthropic foundations have created initiatives targeted to postsecondary institutions. Given that community colleges provide open access to college at an affordable cost, these institutions have received significant attention in promoting the completion agenda. In 2009, President Obama announced the American Graduation Initiative, a strategy to regain our status as the most educated country in the world. This initiative specifically asked community colleges to educate and train an additional 5 million individuals.⁵ Philanthropic organizations such as Lumina Foundation and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation have funded projects that focus on improving attainment of associate's degrees at community colleges.^{6,7} States, too, are working toward promoting access to community colleges. Take for instance, the Tennessee Promise, which created a scholarship program for students seeking associate's degrees by providing students with mentors and full financial aid for two years.

LATINOS IN HIGHER EDUCATION

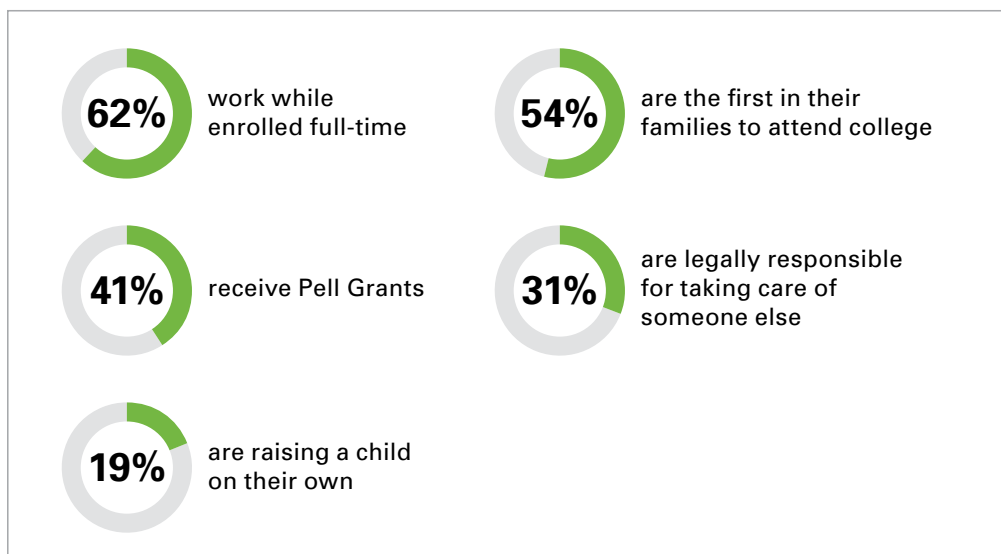
Latinos, in particular, are a population that can contribute significantly to increasing our attainment rates. By 2065, it is projected that nearly one in four U.S. residents will be Latino, up from nearly one in five in 2015.⁸ However, only 23 percent of Latinos over the age of 25 have earned an associate's degree or higher – the lowest rate among any racial and ethnic group currently reported (Figure 1).⁹ By comparison, white adults in the same age group are twice as likely to have at least an associate's degree. As the second largest population group in the United States, increasing Latino student college completion is essential to increasing our attainment rates.¹⁰ Not implementing systemic change will only amplify existing gaps and leave our workforce, and our nation, shorthanded.

The good news is that the share of Latino high school graduates immediately enrolling in college has significantly risen in the last decade, with current rates similar to their white peers (Figure 2).¹¹ However, almost one in two Latinos enroll at community colleges, while the majority of White, Black, Asian, and American Indian students enroll in four-year institutions (see figure 3).^{12, 13} With this understanding, we must pay close attention to how Latino students fare at community colleges.

THE PATH TO COMPLETION

Unfortunately, many students who start college never finish. At two-year institutions, only 16 percent of full-time, first-time degree and certificate-seeking Latino students graduate within three years.¹⁴ Although alarming, this U.S. Department of Education data point dismisses more than half of Latino community college students (52 percent) who attend part-time and ignores Latino students who transfer without first receiving an associate's degree (9 percent)^{15, 16} Additionally, by using three-year graduation rates, we fail to acknowledge responsibilities and barriers many of our community college students face that may prolong enrollment and, therefore, completion.

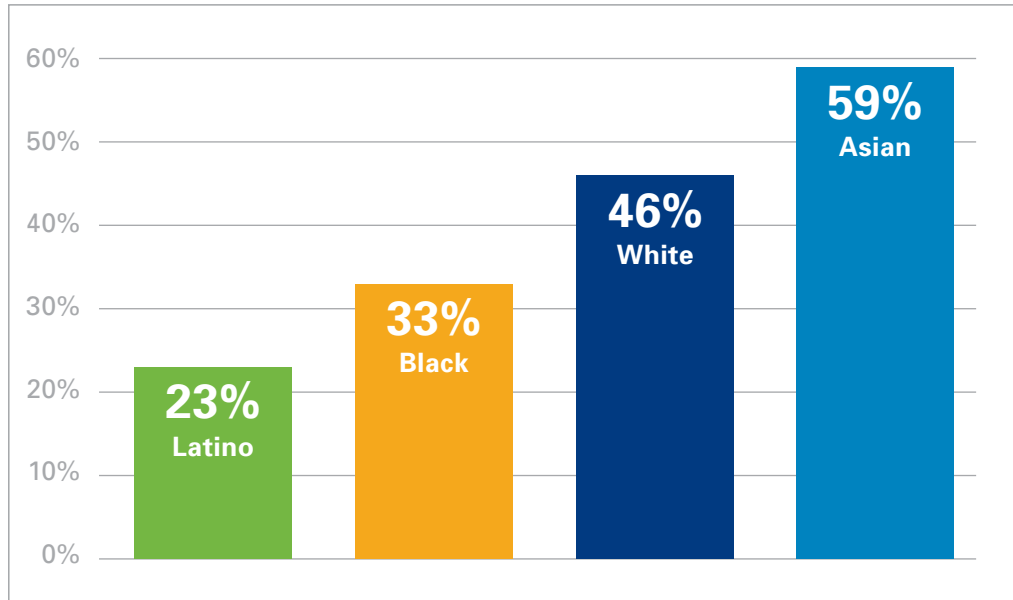
PROFILE OF LATINO COMMUNITY COLLEGE STUDENTS



Source: Analysis of National Postsecondary Student Aid Survey (NPSAS): 2012.

Figure 1

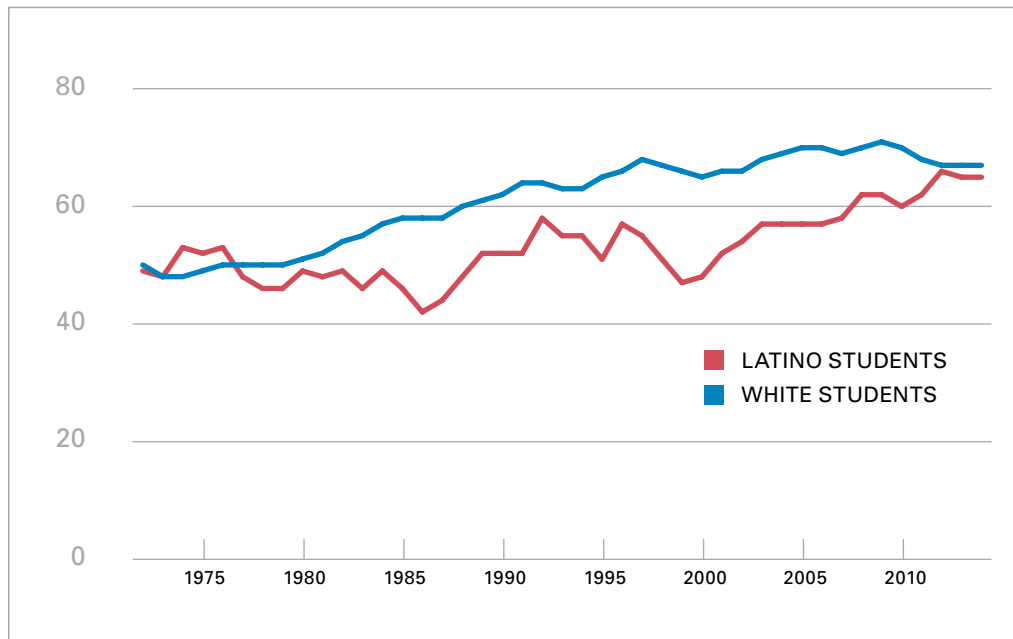
ASSOCIATE'S DEGREE ATTAINMENT OR HIGHER AMONG ADULTS (25 AND OLDER)



Source: United States Census Bureau. Educational Attainment in the United States: 2014.

Figure 2

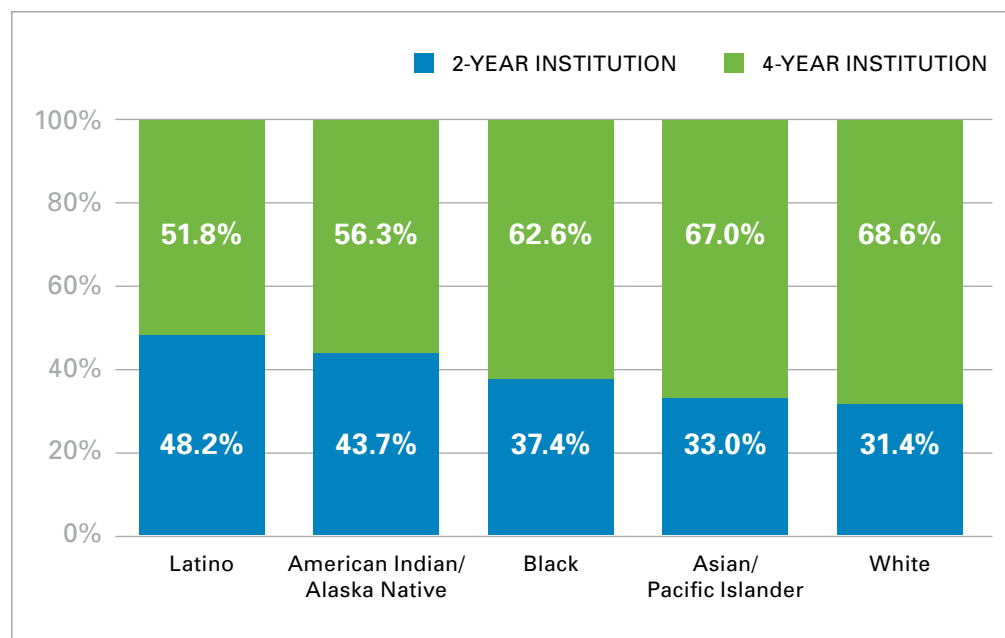
IMMEDIATE ENROLLMENT IN TWO- AND FOUR-YEAR INSTITUTIONS FOR WHITE AND LATINO STUDENTS



Source: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics. Digest of Education Statistics: 2014.

Figure 3

FALL ENROLLMENT BY RACE/ETHNICITY IN 2013



Source: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics. Digest of Education Statistics: 2014.

Even among students attending school full-time, many have to balance competing priorities. For example, three in five students have to work while taking classes and nearly one in three have children or are taking care of another adult. Recognizing these responsibilities helps us understand why many students may take longer than three years to complete. When we expand the timeframe from three to six years and include all first-time students who start at a two-year institution, regardless of part-time or full-time attendance and transfer status, we see a 10 percentage point increase in completion from 16 to 26 percent, with an additional 21 percent still enrolled in college.¹⁷ Although this is a higher completion, this means that more than half of Latino students who first begin at a community college drop out without earning a degree or certificate. While we have addressed some of the challenges that students face, there are other major barriers to progression and completion that colleges must address: helping students become academically prepared for college-level coursework, and providing appropriate financial and living support while enrolled.

ACADEMIC PREPARATION AND COLLEGE READINESS

Many of our Latino students enter college less prepared than their White peers. On average, White high school seniors score 21 points higher than Latino students on the National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP) mathematics test, a standardized assessment given to a sample of students nationwide.¹⁸ Although Latino students' mathematics scores have slightly increased in recent years, the more than 20-point achievement gap between Latino and White students has not changed significantly from 2005 to 2013. A similar trend can be seen in reading scores: In 2013, Latino high school seniors scored 276 points, while their White peers scored 297 points. This 22-point achievement gap has been constant since 2005.

In an ideal world, students who earn a high school diploma should be ready to take college-level courses. To ensure competency, many colleges ask entering students to take a skills assessment in the two main subject areas: math and English.¹⁹ The institution then uses these results to place students into either college-level courses or developmental education (also known as remedial education) for students who were found to not be proficient on the exam. Students who are placed into developmental education are required to take one or more non-credit courses designed to improve their skill level. These courses are required to enroll in college-level courses and do not contribute toward a student's progress toward a credential. Some students may be referred to multiple levels of remediation, which typically take multiple semesters to complete. As open-access institutions, community colleges educate a disproportionate amount of academically underprepared students: approximately 52 percent of all entering community college students place into remediation.²⁰ For Latino students, the rate is higher: 58 percent of Latino students entering a community college are placed into developmental education their first year.^{21, 22}

Despite its intention to help students succeed in college, research shows that developmental education can often be a barrier to completion. Close to 40 percent of community colleges students in remedial education never finish the developmental sequence.²³ Furthermore, two out of three students (66 percent) who start in remedial education at a two-year institution have not attained any degree six years later.²⁴ The story is worse for Latino students: 73 percent do not attain any degree after six years.²⁵ To better prepare students for college-level courses, some states and institutions are working to align high school courses with college curricula and identify accelerated models to streamline the developmental education process.

STUDENT SUPPORTS

Once enrolled, all students, but particularly traditionally underserved individuals, need access to support services. Postsecondary institutions should provide financial, academic, personal, and career services to their students to ensure they are developing the whole student. This includes, but is not limited to, financial aid counseling; academic advisors who proactively reach out to students and help with degree mapping and transferring; tutoring; first-year cohort-based experiences; career and mental health counseling; and childcare. Additionally, many colleges should consider tailoring these services to specific student populations such as veterans, first-generation students, learners with disabilities, and students from underrepresented racial and ethnic backgrounds. Effective initiatives integrate all these supports together, and include them as core components of a comprehensive program.

Colleges that do not have the appropriate resources can partner with community-based organizations specializing in these areas. For example, although many institutions will often provide financial aid counseling, some may not have the ability to host workshops on financial literacy. In those cases, colleges should work with local nonprofits or businesses to provide this information to students who may not otherwise have access.

SCALING PROMISING PROGRAMS

Institutions looking to create or enhance initiatives that increase access and success should identify programs that work well in one community and adapt the model to account for their specific communities. To provide readers with successful models and strategies, we interviewed five initiatives at community colleges that have seen positive outcomes. These nationally recognized initiatives were chosen because of their demonstrated commitment to serve students and the community at large. Many of these institutions also serve a substantial number of Latino students, targeting a population that can substantially contribute to the national completion agenda. We hope their collective experiences can provide key strategies for success.

- The City University of New York (CUNY) has created the Accelerated Study in Associate Program (ASAP), a structured pathway to an associate's degree. ASAP provides financial, academic, and personal supports to its community college students. Participants receive an array of services including personal advising, academic and career counseling, tutoring, tuition waivers, metro benefits, and financial aid for textbooks.
- The Tacoma College Housing Assistance Program in Washington provides three-year rental assistance to full-time community college students who lack affordable housing and find themselves without a home. Created through a partnership between the community college and local housing authority, participants receive academic, mental health, and career counseling. In turn, students must make satisfactory academic progress to remain eligible.
- Lee College in Baytown, Texas has partnered with 10 local school districts to align the high school and college curricula. The college also places advisors at partnering high schools and hosts professional development workshops in the high school. Workshops on college are also provided to parents in both English and Spanish.
- Bunker Hill Community College in Massachusetts created the Summer Transition Program to help incoming students enroll in college-level courses as soon as possible. The program provides free three-week boot camps and eight-week bridge courses to students. To remove additional financial barriers to participation, the college also pays for students' books and materials.
- In Long Beach, California the public school district, community college, local university, and mayor's office have created a partnership to provide students with resources to enroll and succeed in college. In addition to services provided by the other partners, Long Beach City College promises its participating students a free year of tuition and students graduating from the district are guaranteed admission to California State University, Long Beach (CSULB).

CASE 1

COMPREHENSIVE STUDENT SUPPORTS ALONG A PATH TO COMPLETION

INSTITUTION | City University of New York (CUNY)

PROGRAM | Accelerated Study in Associate Programs (ASAP)

LOCATION | New York, New York

INSTITUTIONAL PROFILE

CUNY is one of the largest public university systems in the country. It serves more than half a million students annually through its twenty-four institutions including seven community colleges, eleven four-year colleges, and six graduate and professional schools. CUNY's community colleges enroll mainly students from traditionally underrepresented communities: 39 percent of students are Latino and 29 percent are Black. Additionally, 66 percent of CUNY community college students receive Pell Grants,²⁶ 41 percent attend part-time, and 26 percent are over 24 years of age.²⁷

IMPETUS

ASAP was created as a response to CUNY's low community college completion rates. Although the colleges were administering a number of individual strategies to improve student success, only a quarter of entering students were graduating with an associate's degree within three years. Troubled by these persistently low rates, which mirrored national urban statistics, former CUNY Chancellor, Matthew Goldstein, sought to create a comprehensive program that would remove barriers to full-time study, build degree momentum, and improve timely graduation rates. At the same time, New York City's Center for Economic Opportunity (CEO) issued a call for proposals that addressed the needs of low-income New Yorkers, including young adults between 16-24 and the working poor. Given the fact that CUNY's community colleges overwhelmingly enroll similar target demographics, Chancellor Goldstein proposed the ASAP model to CEO, linking future economic prospects to degree attainment. In 2007, CEO provided funding to launch ASAP at CUNY's then six community colleges with the goal of doubling the three-year graduation rate of its fully proficient students from 24 to 50 percent.²⁸

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

ASAP, a program for eligible CUNY students seeking an associate's degree, encourages participants to graduate within three years by providing comprehensive support services and resources. To participate, students must agree to study full-time in an approved major,²⁹ have no more than two developmental course needs, and be eligible for in-state tuition. ASAP targets incoming and continuing or transfer students with no more than 15 credits upon entry. Students are selected by the college but must opt-in to join the program. To remove financial barriers to full-time attendance, the program provides free public transportation and textbooks and waives any remaining tuition and fees after Pell Grants and state aid are awarded. Additionally, ASAP offers a set of first-year block-scheduled courses to help students build a connected community.³⁰ Participants also receive consolidated course schedules that allow classes to be taken in mornings, afternoons, evenings, or weekends to help students balance school, work, and domestic responsibilities.

All ASAP students are assigned to one advisor with whom they work from program entrance through graduation. Advisors support both academic and personal growth of students to help them stay on track to graduate in a timely manner. All students, regardless of academic profile, must meet with their ASAP advisor twice a month during their first semester. After the first semester, students are placed into high, medium, and low-needs advisement groups based on advisors' assessment of academic performance, personal resiliency, and program compliance.³¹ These groups determine frequency and mode of contact. At the end of each subsequent semester, students are reevaluated and reassigned by their advisors. For students enrolled in development courses or identified by faculty members as struggling academically, weekly tutoring is required. Students must also participate in ASAP career development events or meet with the ASAP career and employment specialist each semester.

Across six cohorts that have graduated to date, CUNY's evaluation shows that ASAP students are more than twice as likely to graduate within three years than similar non-ASAP students (52 to 23 percent, respectively).³² The program has also been found to be particularly beneficial for underserved students, such as individuals with remedial need and racially underrepresented students. Almost half of ASAP students who entered the program with developmental education needs graduated in three years, whereas only one in five of their non-ASAP peers finished within the same time. Additionally, Black ASAP students were at least three times as likely to graduate within three years and Latinos are twice as likely to complete compared to their non-ASAP peers within the same time frame.

LEARNING FROM EXPERIENCE

Creating a comprehensive program similar to ASAP is no easy feat. With so many people involved in the process and many priorities and responsibilities demanding attention, it can be challenging to implement a successful program. Three key factors, among others, were identified as being critical to the program's success.

SUCCESS FACTOR 1: STRONG LEADERSHIP AT ALL LEVELS

Once CUNY secured funding from the City of New York to launch ASAP, the next step was to ensure that each of CUNY's community colleges implemented the program as designed. CUNY's integrated system structure, history of successful multi-campus programs, and strong support from senior leadership made it possible to create and launch a program with a coherent structure. Planning for ASAP began with identifying the most common barriers faced by CUNY community college students both in and out of the classroom. A cross-functional team of CUNY staff and faculty with significant understanding of the academic, personal, financial, and social issues that most commonly impact college success was formed to design the program. This team identified evidence-based practices found in and out of CUNY that addressed the entire student experience from entrance through graduation. This included identification of essential financial resources, mandatory and integrated student support services, recommended staffing structures, and the importance of regular data use for evaluation and program management purposes. CEO was also critical in helping to shape a rigorous research and evaluation agenda, which has allowed ASAP to measure progress towards its goals and integrate the use of data for constant improvement.

“The most important requirement to launch and successfully implement a comprehensive program like ASAP is buy-in from senior leadership.”

*Donna Linderman,
University Dean for Student
Success Initiatives and ASAP
Executive Director, CUNY*

After the program was designed, dedicated ASAP teams were hired at each participating college. ASAP staff typically include a director, advisors (one per 150 students), a career and employment specialist, a recruitment coordinator, an office administrator, and part-time tutors.³³ College ASAP directors play a critical role in forging relationships with college units to ensure the program operates in an integrated manner. For example, academic departments are asked to reserve blocked courses for first-year ASAP students each semester, registrars support early registration to ensure ASAP students receive consolidated course schedules, and financial aid and bursars offices assist with timely determination and application of any needed tuition waivers. The CUNY Central Office ASAP team also provides critical support to all ASAP colleges to maximize program impact. This includes general administrative oversight, technical support, program-wide resource management (such as textbooks and public transportation vouchers), ongoing research/evaluation and data support, and external relationship management, including fundraising to build capacity.

SUCCESS FACTOR 2: ESTABLISHING PARTNERSHIPS

ASAP was funded in January 2007 and began serving its first cohort of 1,132 students that fall semester. Although a quick time frame, ASAP enrollment targets were met by building on CUNY's strong partnerships with the New York City Department of Education (NYCDOE) and a variety of citywide non-profit organizations and public agencies. CUNY works closely with hundreds of public high schools, High School Equivalency (HSE) programs, community-based organizations, and city and state agencies supporting college readiness and access. These partnerships have been particularly helpful when reaching specific populations. For example, to increase awareness of ASAP among adult learners, program staff conducted outreach to CUNY adult literacy and continuing education programs and Educational Opportunity Centers (EOC), which are U.S. Department

of Education programs that provide counseling and college admissions information to adults wanting to continue their education. More recently, ASAP is attempting to recruit more adults in public housing interested in pursuing an associate's degree. To increase awareness with this target group, ASAP is in the process of forging a relationship with New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA).

ASAP also partners with CUNY Start, a sister program that targets associate degree-seeking students with three or more developmental course needs. Students in CUNY Start agree to defer matriculation for one semester to participate in an intensive and structured academic support experience. CUNY Start students then have two opportunities to retake required skills assessment or exit tests. Those who improve their proficiency enough to meet ASAP requirements can move directly into the program the next semester.

ASAP leadership acknowledges that eight months was a very short amount of time to develop and launch a comprehensive multi-campus program. For institutions considering creating an ASAP-like program, ASAP recommends a one- to two-year planning period, which should include time to foster strong partnerships in and out of the institution to support recruitment.

SUCCESS FACTOR 3: START AND END WITH THE STUDENT

To implement a successful program like ASAP, institutions must assess the structure, services, and policies at their institution that help (or hinder) timely degree completion. Senior leadership should be reflective and ask what supports are missing from their campus. At times, the answers may call for identifying new funding and possibly reallocating existing resources by combining or eliminating less effective programs to create a more comprehensive and structured experience for students. Although consolidating programs may be politically difficult, it is important to frame changes in terms of the student. ASAP staff constantly reassesses its students' needs and how the program can better meet those needs. All discussions about programming and resources begin and end with a consideration of "who," "what," and "why." Who are the students ASAP is designed to serve; what services are specifically needed at each stage of the college experience; and why ASAP was created in the first place, with a strong focus on improving the low graduation rates of students.

RESOURCE

Inside ASAP: A Resource Guide on Program Structure, Components and Management details how to structure and manage an ASAP-like program.

<http://www1.cuny.edu/sites/asap/wp-content/uploads/sites/8/2015/05/Resource-Guide.pdf>

"People may ask about ASAP, 'Why is something this labor-intensive necessary?' A better question might be, 'What else should we be doing to help the students we admit earn their degrees in a timely manner?'"

*Donna Linderman,
University Dean for Student
Success Initiatives and ASAP
Executive Director, CUNY*

CASE 2

ALLEVIATING HOUSING INSECURITY

ORGANIZATIONS | Tacoma Community College and Tacoma Housing Authority

PROGRAM | Tacoma Community College Housing Assistance Program

LOCATION | Tacoma, Washington

INSTITUTIONAL PROFILE

Tacoma Community College (TCC) is located in the state of Washington and has served the community of Tacoma since the 1960s. It serves over 7,000 students of which 46 percent are White, nine percent are Latino, eight percent are Black, and six percent are Asian.^{34, 35} Like many community colleges, TCC serves students with risk factors that can prolong graduation without the proper support services. Among all TCC undergraduate students, 44 percent are older than 24 years of age, 41 percent attend part-time, and 40 percent receive Pell Grants.

IMPETUS

Organizations in Tacoma have a history of partnering around common goals. This strong sense of collaboration made it easy for Michael Mirra, Tacoma Housing Authority (THA) Executive Director, to approach Pamela Transue, TCC's President at the time, when he noticed that several community college students were requesting housing services. To assess the situation, TCC designed a survey and found that over 100 students were facing housing instability, many of whom living out of their cars or with family and friends for short periods of time. Homeless youth, already facing the typical academic success barriers, must also overcome hunger, lack of healthcare, and often unsafe and overcrowded living conditions.³⁶ Thus, a three-year pilot program was launched that would leverage public housing dollars while providing educational support to alleviate some of these barriers to success.

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

The TCC Housing Assistance Program provides rental assistance and student support services to TCC students and their dependents facing housing insecurity. To participate in the program, students must enroll full-time, maintain at least a 2.0 GPA, make adequate progress to a degree, and attend financial literacy workshops. TCC students learn about the program during registration at the start of the semester and must apply to be considered. The college is responsible for screening participants; providing completion and mental health coaches responsible for identifying barriers and determining appropriate resources; assigning career counselors; and tracking academic progress. Students in the workforce development program have priority over students in other academic tracks given their access to a case manager. The housing authority is responsible for performing background checks, providing housing choice vouchers, and assisting with security deposit payments often needed to lease an apartment. Given the limited number of vouchers, only 25 TCC students are eligible at any one time. The vouchers are valid for three years or until the student graduates, whichever comes first.

Based on first year outcomes, the program is showing positive results. Students in the program are three times more likely to re-enroll the following academic year compared with unassisted homeless TCC students.

LEARNING FROM EXPERIENCE

Chosen for its solutions-oriented approach, we interviewed TCC and THA to highlight some of the practices that were critical to the housing assistance program's success. Below are three factors that emerged in our conversation.

SUCCESS FACTOR 1: BUILD FROM AVAILABLE RESOURCE

Other than the 25 vouchers sponsored by THA, the housing assistance program had no separate funding stream. Thus, any costs incurred would have to be kept to a minimum. To provide adequate support services to these students, TCC staff first assessed the resources available at the community college through already-established programs. The coordinator started by analyzing support services within her purview. She noticed that students in the workforce development program were doing well in school. It was the only program that provided a case manager to students. To leverage the case manager as a resource, the housing assistance program partnered with the workforce development program by targeting its students during recruitment. Although students from other academic departments could apply for the housing assistance program, students in the workforce development program would receive priority. Soon thereafter, the coordinator added a part-time completion coach who could help analyze program outcomes while providing additional support to students. The institution incurred the cost of this position.

"I was trying to do what I could with the areas within my control. Then, after that, I looked on campus to see who else I could partner with."

Shema Hanebutte, Dean of Counseling, Advising, Access and Career Services, TCC

SUCCESS FACTOR 2: PROBLEM SOLVE

The housing assistance program has faced several challenges since inception. In 2013, the program released its first application. Due to budget sequestration at the federal level, however, THA was unable to provide housing vouchers for over six months. In the interim, many students who applied to the program withdrew from school. Instead of eliminating the program, staff opened a second round of applications once the vouchers became available. During this round, THA noticed that some vouchers were not being used, meaning that students were not taking advantage of the housing assistance even though they had been accepted to the program. Unbeknownst to THA, these students faced additional financial barriers and could not afford the security deposit required by many apartment complexes. Now that THA understands the challenge, they have set aside additional funds to help students in need pay the requested amount.

Over the last three years, additional tweaks have been made to the selection process to create a fairer system. Originally, the selection process would rank students based on certain priorities such as family size and veteran status. However, given the limited number of housing vouchers, staff realized that this ranking barred students who were single and had never served in the military. Thus, in the most recent application cycle, the selection process used a lottery system. Participants who are homeless still have priority over individuals who are at risk of being homeless.

Although Tacoma did not have a prototype housing assistance program to follow, they have been successful at alleviating housing insecurity for several students. They attribute part of their achievement to their ability to problem-solve and use challenges as opportunities for growth. Given the continued need of TCC students, THA foresees providing housing support to additional cohorts in the coming years.

SUCCESS FACTOR 3: PROVIDE WRAPAROUND SERVICES

While it is labor intensive to provide wraparound services – social, emotional, and financial support provided to students outside of the classroom – staff at the housing assistance program believe that it is a critical piece to success. Compared to traditionally underserved students, individuals facing housing insecurity experience additional barriers such as limited access to nutritious food and health care. For these reasons, homeless students need high-touch services. TCC, for example, has completion coaches and mental health counselors who check-in monthly with program participants. For institutions that do not have the resources to provide these support services, TCC suggests establishing partnerships with community-based organizations that may already be working in this space.

RESOURCES

TCC Housing Assistance Program website, which includes an application and details on the program. <https://www.tacomacc.edu/resourcesandservices/housing/>

CASE 3

BUILDING HIGH SCHOOL TO COLLEGE PATHWAYS

INSTITUTION | Lee College

PROGRAM | Student Success to the Core Initiative

LOCATION | Baytown, Texas

INSTITUTIONAL PROFILE

Lee College is located in the Gulf Coast region of Texas, a thriving industrial community comprised of employment at petro-chemical facilities. This community college serves 11 school districts and enrolls nearly 6,500 students. As a Latino serving institution (HSI), 38 percent of the college's student body is comprised of Latino students. White and Black students make up 41 and 16 percent of the student population, respectively. Many students at Lee College have one or more factors that put them at risk of delayed graduation or non-completion: 79 percent attend part-time, 38 percent are over the age of 24, and 35 percent receive Pell Grants.³⁷

IMPETUS

Although Student Success to the Core began in 2015, its roots are grounded in the Gulf Coast Partners Achieving Student Success (GCPASS) program. GCPASS was created to increase low postsecondary enrollment rates of local high school students. Funded by the Houston Endowment, Lee College partnered with only one school district – Goose Creek Consolidated Independent School District (GCCISD) – for three academic years. Given GCPASS' positive outcomes, Lee College wanted to expand its support services and strategies to other school districts in their service area so as to not lose the knowledge gained and momentum created through the program once the grant ended.

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

Student Success to the Core Initiative is a partnership between Lee College and its surrounding school districts aimed at creating a smooth transition from high

school to college. Using a similar model to GCPASS, the institutional partners in the Student Success to the Core Initiative work together to align high school and college curricula and provide students with the necessary support services during the college application process. Lee College places Transition Specialists who provide comprehensive enrollment services on high school campuses at no charge to the district. These advisors are cross-trained on all of the compulsory and standard steps that students need to complete in order to enroll in any community college or university. They work with high school counselors and academic coaches to make sure that students in ninth through eleventh grade take advantage of dual credit courses, and that seniors complete the appropriate college and financial aid applications, participate in assessment testing, visit college campuses, attend new student orientation, and register for courses their first semester. High school students are also exposed to various careers through professional development workshops in their schools and career-cluster tours led by college faculty. Additionally, the Student Success to the Core Initiative engages families to help create a college-going culture at home. Parent college workshops are held by Lee College in English and Spanish throughout regional locations.

Since the Student Success to the Core Initiative has recently begun, no regional outcome data exists. However, we do know that in 2014, Lee College experienced a 13 percent enrollment increase from GCCISD, the original district partner. More students from this school district were also taking pre-college testing such as the Scholastic Assessment Test (SAT) and Texas Success Initiative (TSI) Assessment.³⁸ Between academic years 2010-2011 and 2013-2014, the number of students taking these tests increased more than twofold, from 471 to 1,231 students. College-ready students and, to a smaller extent, students placing into remedial education, were passing college-level gateway English and math courses at higher rates during implementation of GCPASS compared with baseline year numbers.

LEARNING FROM EXPERIENCE

To understand how to create a program that provides adequate college-going support for high school students, we interviewed the Student Success to the Core Initiative. Based on our conversation, the following success factors emerged:

SUCCESS FACTOR 1: BE RESOURCEFUL

To continue GCPASS's success past the end of the grant, Dennis Brown, President of Lee College, identified institutional funds to help sustain the established partnership with GCCISD and expand the model to additional school districts. In addition to institutional funds, Brown sought out external sources of revenue, including funding from corporate partners and the college's foundation. Lee College also secured additional grants that target specific demographic groups such as low-income students, students of color, and first-generation learners. To maximize financial resources, the director of student success alliance hosts a monthly team meeting with every program director responsible for a student success grant. During the meeting, directors find similarities in goals, deliverables, and events. If possible, directors combine two similar events into one and invite their own constituents to maximize human resources and create a larger impact.

SUCCESS FACTOR 2: RELATIONSHIP BUILDING AND PARTNER ENGAGEMENT

As the grant writer and fiscal agent, Lee College hired a director and took the responsibility of leading the project including delineating and assigning tasks, running meetings, and collecting and analyzing data. Realizing that this structure was creating a power differential between the college and its partners, Lee College worked to change its practices to those that clearly demonstrated equal ownership. Strategies included having equal representation from partners on teams and hosting team meetings on each partner's campus.

For the first strategy, the initiative created a core steering team comprised of members from partnering school districts, high schools, parents of elementary through high school students, and college staff who lead various academic and student support divisions. The steering team then established small groups comprised of members from both educational institutions focused on certain aspects of the student experience. These interinstitutional teams included a College Transition Team and four Professional Alignment Councils (PACs). The College Transition Team was made up of high school and college counselors and advisors to ensure the transition between high school and college was seamless. The PACs, comprised of faculty members from both the high school and college, were charged with aligning high school English, math, social studies, and science curricula with college courses. Today, even after the alignment phase, high school teachers and college professors are still meeting. They provide peer evaluation and collaborate on creating student assignments. A "Cradle to Career" community network and a local P-16 council made up of community leaders were also organized. More recently, Lee College created a parental involvement taskforce to seek family engagement in order to truly create a college-going culture that starts at home.

To increase partner and team member engagement, the second strategy called for hosting half of the team meetings at the high schools and the other half on the college campus. Prior to each team meeting, the main project leads convene to develop the agenda together. Each hosting institution is then responsible for leading the meeting and setting the date for the next meeting in advance.

SUCCESS FACTOR 3: ENGAGE THE RIGHT STAKEHOLDERS

To decide which faculty members were going to be part of the PACs – teams working to align the high school and college curricula – the steering team met to deliberate key characteristics. They chose faculty who were supportive of the program's mission and easy to work with, even if those individuals were not in leadership positions. However, after some time, the steering team realized that what the PACs needed were people who structurally had the ability to change the curriculum at the high school level. For example, the English curricula PAC had been meeting for about a year and a half and still had not fully aligned their courses. The steering committee began asking the PAC a series of questions about the culture and policies at the high schools and realized that they were missing a key stakeholder – the English curriculum specialist. Once the specialist was brought into the conversations, the PAC was able to move forward rather quickly.

"The whole project is about building relationships. People have been doing these things [providing student supports] for years but what's different about this project is establishing a relationship amongst the personnel that do the work."

DeDe Griffith, Director of Student Success, Lee College

SUCCESS FACTOR 4: USE DATA

One of Lee College's main strategies with its partners was using data to build buy-in. First, Lee College showed partner school districts its general enrollment data and statistics on which students were placing into remedial education. Lee College soon realized that in order to truly build buy-in, it needed to show relevant data from a trusted source. Thus, the college showed its partners how to retrieve their own district and high schools' post-secondary performance data from the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board website. In this way, Lee College moved the conversation from increasing enrollment rates on its own campus to the importance of understanding how students were faring during high school and after graduation. Lee College provides data in interim reports and an annual summary report to each high school campus. These reports include seniors' progress through the standard college enrollment steps. Conversations about data are often held in private spaces to encourage transparent and courageous conversations about how to improve student outcomes.

RESOURCES

Smooth Transitions from High School to Community College: English Curriculum Alignment Guide and Mathematics Curriculum Alignment Guide were developed by the Institute for Evidence-Based Change based on the experience of the GCPASS project. These guides can help high school and community college faculty better align math and English curricula in their communities.

English curriculum: <http://www.iebcnow.org/IEBCPublicFiles/iebc.public/64/64d38433-3819-4ffa-81f7-b284c34a9921.pdf>

Math curriculum: <http://www.iebcnow.org/IEBCPublicFiles/iebc.public/14/14caaad7-d0c7-4d85-9ebb-c24a677f8d26.pdf>

CASE 4

THE PROMISE OF A COLLEGE EDUCATION

PARTNERSHIP | Long Beach Unified School District
Long Beach City College
California State University-Long Beach
City of Long Beach

PROGRAM | Long Beach College Promise

LOCATION | Long Beach, California

INSTITUTIONAL PROFILES

Long Beach Unified School District (LBUSD) is the third largest school district in the state of California and educates more than 80,000 K-12 students who are enrolled in 85 public schools. Over half of the district's students are Latino (55 percent) and two out of three (67 percent) qualify for free or reduced lunch.³⁹

Long Beach City College (LBCC) is located in an urban district in southern California and serves more than 24,000 students.⁴⁰ With a Latino student population of 54 percent, LBCC is designated as a Latino serving institution (HSI). The remaining students are White (15 percent), Black (14 percent), and Asian (11 percent). Additionally, 60 percent of LBCC's students attend part-time, 39 percent receive Pell Grants, and 35 percent are older than 24 years of age.

California State University-Long Beach (CSULB) is a four-year institution that enrolls close to 37,000 students, of which approximately 32,000 students are undergraduate.⁴¹ This institution is also an HSI, with 38 percent of its student population being Latino. Twenty-three percent of its students are Asian, 20 percent are white, and four percent are Black. Like many universities, most CSULB undergraduate students attend full-time (86 percent) and are 24 years of age and under (83 percent). Among all its undergraduate students, half receive Pell Grants.

IMPETUS

Educational institutions in Long Beach have a history of collaborating to solve local challenges. In the 1990s, Long Beach saw the loss of its naval base and an influx of immigrant communities. These two changes impacted the economic status of families and increased the need for additional supports in schools. To keep the community economically vibrant, community leaders called on LBUSD, LBCC,

and CSULB to develop a partnership to prepare students for college by providing career and technical education pathways and offering counseling. From these conversations, the Seamless Education Partnership emerged. This 20-year effort was the predecessor to the Long Beach College Promise and laid the foundation for strong partnerships.

ABOUT THE LONG BEACH COLLEGE PROMISE

The Long Beach College Promise, a joint commitment by LBUSD, LBCC, and CSULB to provide a clear pathway for local students to attain a college education, was established in 2008. Formalized through a memorandum of understanding (MOU) defining the goals of the partnership, each institution committed to providing specific services:

- LBUSD fourth and fifth graders take college tours of LBCC and CSULB. This allows students to experience a college campus early on. In middle school, LBUSD asks its students to sign a pledge that their families will take the necessary steps to ensure students will be college ready by graduation. Additionally, LBUSD has aligned its curriculum to LBCC and CSULB's college entrance requirements and offers college preparatory courses for high school students and subsidizes college preparatory exam fees.
- LBCC guaranteed LBUSD students immediately enrolling full-time in the college one free semester of college. Through the LBCC Foundation, the college pays for any tuition not covered by financial aid. LBCC has also decided to place students in college-level courses and remedial education based on high school achievement – not just placement test scores.
- CSULB, with over 93,000 applications for 9,000 spots, has guaranteed admission to LBUSD students who complete minimum college preparatory or transfer requirements.

These commitments help all three institutions fulfill their mission of making higher education accessible to all students in their community.

In 2014, the College Promise underwent some changes. The new mayor, Robert Garcia, wanted to amplify the vision and partnered with local business to start the Long Beach Internship Challenge to create internship opportunities for high school and college students. The city of Long Beach is the initiative's newest partner. Furthermore, LBUSD and LBCC both increased their commitment. LBUSD promised to expand universal access to preschool for underserved families by 2018, and LBCC expanded free tuition from one semester to the first full academic year.

LBUSD students seem more prepared now for college than they were at the start of the College Promise program. In 2012-2013, 58 percent of LBUSD seniors were ready for English courses at LBCC, compared with 54 percent in 2010-2011. A similar increase is seen for students who are ready to take math courses. Additionally, between 2008 and 2014, more than 12,000 students have received one free semester at LBCC. CSULB has also seen an increase of new LBUSD freshman from 519 students in fall 2008 to 743 in fall 2012 – an increase of 43 percent.

LEARNING FROM EXPERIENCE

Long Beach has succeeded in creating multiple seamless pathways to postsecondary education for students in their city. Based on our conversation with a few members of their team, there are four key factors that led them to success.

SUCCESS FACTOR 1: CREATE A BLAME-FREE EDUCATION MODEL

It's common to hear of educational institutions holding other schools accountable for students' academic readiness. For example, some community colleges have said that it takes their students longer to graduate because the K-12 education system does not prepare those students adequately. In turn, four-year institutions have blamed community colleges for not having a rigorous curriculum, thereby impacting bachelor's degree graduation rates for transfer students. At Long Beach, instead of playing the blame game, each institution took responsibility for what they could. Since LBUSD's third graders were falling behind, the institutions came together to problem-solve. The solution was to better prepare teachers. Given the number of local teachers that graduate from CSULB's teacher education program, CSULB resolved to revamp its program. Now, CSULB's program provides hands-on experience and in-classroom teaching. The theory is that providing better teacher training will positively impact K-12 learning in their community. Better-prepared students will be academically ready for the rigors of postsecondary education.

"What happens when institutions get pressure to do better? They can rise to the occasion and get better or they can start blaming others."

Terri Carbaugh, Associate Vice President for Legislative & External Relations, CSULB

SUCCESS FACTOR 2: STRONG LEADERSHIP AND WELL-BUILT INFRASTRUCTURE

The presidents of LBUSD, LBCC and CSULB all serve on the executive committee of the initiative. In this way, they signal to staff that the College Promise is an equally shared commitment by all institutions. To coordinate the initiative, senior leadership hired an executive director and created a steering committee comprised of vice presidents from all three institutions. This steering committee is focused on improving eight educational pathways and oversees four advisory committees: institutional research, business, communications/government relations, and finance. Academic deans and directors of success programs are involved in the advisory committees and meet three times per year. Initially, the committees identified enrollment and completion gaps in the educational pathways. To create action plans, the committees invited faculty members who could provide insights on classroom teaching and learning and program managers who understood student challenges. Inviting faculty and staff created buy-in from individuals who work directly with students and allowed them to meet their counterparts at other institutions. Currently, the committees are in the midst of executing the action plans. For example, it was through one of these meetings that LBUSD and LBCC realized there was a gap in the curriculum and that it needed to be further aligned. After much discussion, LBUSD is currently working towards requiring math senior year of school.

"The literal promise of a college education was generated by the Superintendent-President of LBCC, Superintendent of Schools at LBUSD, and the CSULB Presidents."

Judy Seal, Executive Director, Long Beach College Promise and Long Beach Education Foundation

SUCCESS FACTOR 3: ACCOUNTABILITY MECHANISMS

Leaders at LBUSD, LBCC, and CSULB have kept their own institutions accountable to the College Promise initiative through the MOU, annual report, and cost sharing.

Through the MOU, the institutions developed a joint mission for education that centered on the student. To help meet the goals of the initiative, each institution pledged to provide specific services or create policies that would help create a seamless pathway for students in their community. If institutions failed to meet their commitments, this public document would make it easier for external individuals to hold the institutions accountable.

Being accountable to the community is a mechanism that has worked well for Long Beach. Each year, the College Promise initiative releases a report to the community providing baseline information about student participation and outcomes. The report takes close to five months to produce and requires input from researchers at each institution. The writing process alone allows the partners to examine how the initiative is progressing and is another way to keep the institutions accountable to the community. Additionally, each educational institution is responsible for funding its own commitment to the College Promise. This approach encourages institutions to prioritize this initiative by directing appropriate resources. Additionally, costs that arise due to coordination are shared between the partners.

SUCCESS FACTOR 4: DATA SHARING

Most community colleges rely on placement test scores to assess the academic skill level of entering students. The test scores help institutions place students into college-level or remedial courses. However, LBCC noticed that their underrepresented students, particularly Black and Latino students, were disproportionately placed into remedial courses. Instead of relying solely on the test scores, LBCC began to use an alternative placement model where students are placed in classes based on high school transcripts. LBCC is now able to place more students directly into college-level courses, which has had no effect on course success or persistence. To implement this model, LBCC and LBUSD created a data-sharing MOU. LBCC now wants to create a similar agreement with CSULB. With more detailed information, LBCC will be able to know more detailed information about their students who transfer to the university. For instance, LBCC does not know if their students who transfer after two years fare better or worse than their students who transfer after four years or how their underrepresented students are succeeding compared with their peers. By leveraging the successful data sharing for alternative placement, the researchers at the three institutions will consider how to share student-level data across high school, community college, and the university to better track the progress of their students.

“The point isn’t to have a Promise program. The point is how to make a promise to the students.”

Terri Carbaugh, Associate Vice President for Legislative & External Relations, CSULB

RESOURCE

To create a college promise program in your community, download Long Beach’s College Promise Program PowerPoint available on their website: <http://www.longbeachcollegepromise.org/>

To create an MOU between the institutions in your community, use Long Beach College Promise Program’s as a template: <http://www.longbeachcollegepromise.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/Signed-LB-Col-Promise-Pledge-2014.pdf>

CASE 5

USING THE SUMMER TO BETTER PREPARE STUDENTS FOR COLLEGE

INSTITUTION | Bunker Hill Community College (BHCC)

PROGRAM | Summer Transition Program

LOCATION | Massachusetts

INSTITUTIONAL PROFILE

Bunker Hill Community College (BHCC), a multi-campus urban institution located in Boston and Chelsea, is the largest community college in Massachusetts. It is the primary pathway to any postsecondary education for public high school graduates in Boston. The college serves approximately 14,000 students, of which 24 percent are Black, 24 percent are White, 23 percent are Latino, and 10 percent are Asian.⁴² Two in three students attend school part-time and half receive Pell Grants. Additionally, 47 percent of BHCC students are over the age of 24.

IMPETUS

In 2006, BHCC received a U.S. Department of Education Title III grant to increase student engagement, persistence, and achievement. This grant allowed BHCC to scale its use of Learning Community Seminars and Clusters, a high impact practice that features small class sizes, active learning, culturally relevant academic content, and integrated supports. Students enrolled in the college's learning communities are more likely to complete developmental coursework, persist in their studies, and progress toward degree completion when compared with a similar comparison group.⁴³ In 2007, the College was chosen to participate in Achieving the Dream, an initiative focused on closing achievement gaps for low-income students and students of color. The integration of Title III and Achieving the Dream helped the institution shift from focusing on student access to completion. It also pushed the institution to use data for decision-making and program improvements. By analyzing data to understand how their students were faring, BHCC saw a need to provide additional support to students in developmental education. Faculty and staff chose to use practices from the learning community model, which has a track record of success, to meet the needs of incoming students placing into

developmental education. The resulting Summer Transition Program places an emphasis on the active learning environment and integrated support services that permeate the college's Learning Communities.

ABOUT THE SUMMER TRANSITION PROGRAM

With financial support from the Massachusetts Department of Higher Education, the Summer Transition Program was established in 2012 to accelerate incoming students' successful completion of developmental courses in English and Math and facilitate the transition into college courses. The program consists of three-week boot camps and eight-week bridge courses and is offered to students free of charge. The institution also covers the cost of books and materials. Boot camps are for students who just barely missed placement into a college or upper developmental level course, while bridge classes target students needing intensive instruction. Bridge courses are clustered so that each course is linked with the next developmental education course in the sequence or a college-level course. This accelerated model allows incoming students to finish their developmental education over the summer so that they can enroll in college-level courses in the fall. Some bridge course pairings enable students to earn their first college credits over the summer. The Summer Transition curriculum is designed based on intended outcomes and provides tailored support by instructors to deepen student learning. Students in the Summer Transition Program are also provided with tutoring and peer mentors. Summer bridge participants are paired with success coaches that help with educational planning by registering them for fall courses and creating a degree map.

"Like most things that work well here, the Summer Transition Program is effective because there is a synergy between vision and resources from senior leadership and the drive to increase student success at the grassroots."

Lori Catalozzi, Dean of Humanities and Learning Communities, BHCC

From 2012 through 2014, the Summer Transition Program served more than 800 students.⁴⁴ Among those participants, four out of five enrolled at BHCC the fall semester immediately after attending the transition program. In 2014, nearly three in four students (74 percent) who enrolled in the highest bridge course level progressed to college-level course work. For summer boot camp participants, 50 percent moved up a level in at least one developmental area.

LEARNING FROM EXPERIENCE

Several institutions are now considering how to increase a student's likelihood of placing into college-level coursework. Based on our conversation with Bunker Hill, there are three factors that can help these institutions succeed.

SUCCESS FACTOR 1: FACULTY INVOLVEMENT

Since the onset, faculty has been a driving force in moving the college's success agenda. The Summer Transition Program was built upon the positive results of a number of faculty-led student success initiatives, including Learning Community Clusters and developmental education reform. Clusters emerged early on as a primary vehicle for increasing college readiness and decreasing time-to-degree completion by compressing developmental courses into fewer semesters, linking developmental and college-level courses, and providing learner-centered, accelerated pedagogy. The positive results of the cluster model helped spur

comprehensive reform of the college's developmental math program in 2012. Nearly 50 math faculty members came together to design the new curriculum, which consisted of targeted classroom interventions and acceleration policies for students. This curriculum shortened the number of courses from three to two for non-STEM developmental math students. In two years, course completion in developmental math increased from 57 to 66 percent. The success of the math department's curricular reforms paved the way for similar innovations in English. The faculty in the English department developed an accelerated model that enabled students to complete developmental English and college credit-bearing English composition in a single semester. Faculty adapted the theme-based, student-centered learning, and integrated supports offered in BHCC's Learning Community model into the curriculum. In two years, 77 percent of students who participated in the accelerated English track between spring 2013 to fall 2014 had successfully completed the first level of English composition, while 43 percent of students in the non-accelerated pathway had completed the course. These initiatives offered a model for sustaining and growing a faculty-led effort supported by senior leadership that can be leveraged in the future.

SUCCESS FACTOR 2: PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES FOR FACULTY

In 2011, faculty and support staff involved with BHCC's Learning Communities instituted a professional development program called the Innovative Teaching and Learning Series. Through the program, nationally recognized scholars are invited to provide evidence-based research and engage participants in examination of pedagogies and practices used to increase student learning. This inquiry-based approach encourages educators to share their experiences, learn from one another, and improve the classroom experience for their students. More than 200 faculty and staff participate each year in the Innovative Teaching and Learning Series. The program has influenced the ongoing professional development of math and English faculty. Developmental math instructors formed a Developmental Math Working Group in 2012 that meets regularly to engage in research, examine classroom experiences and data, and create consensus around ongoing curricular alignment and reform. The math department offers discipline-specific professional development specifically for their developmental education faculty, including faculty teaching in the Summer Transition Program. The English department also regularly convenes their full-time and adjunct faculty to assess student work, disseminate discipline-specific research, and share proven practices. An English faculty member coordinates the training and ongoing professional development of English instructors who teach in the Summer Transition Program. End-of-summer focus group discussions among summer bridge and boot camp faculty in both math and English are used to inform the program structure and curriculum the following summer.

“We do find that a lot of the students who are coming to us and who are highly motivated are those who realize that they have been out of school for one, two, three or more years, and want to brush up on skills before they come back to school full-time. And so our community based partners have been instrumental in bringing more students to us.”

*Nuri Chandler-Smith,
Dean of Academic
Support & College Pathway
Programs, BHCC*

SUCCESS FACTOR 3: STRONG PARTNERSHIPS ON AND OFF CAMPUS

Integrating academic and student supports into the Summer Transition Program has required greater internal collaboration. The Division of Academic Support & College Pathway Programs is responsible for coordinating the program. To ensure program success, staff in this office must work with various academic divisions to develop and publish the course schedule and collaborate with BHCC's admissions and advising staff. Additionally, this office coordinates the integration of tutors, mentors, and success coach advisors into the program and ensures that students are connected to advising services for fall registration. The Division of Academic Support & College Pathway Programs must also recruit students. Thus, it has created partnerships with local high schools and community organizations. In fact, most of the Summer Transition Program participants come to the college from one of several community-based programs that offer pathways to BHCC, which has led to approximately 70 percent of program participants being non-recent high school graduates. Central to the success of the college's community partnerships is a commitment to creating pathway models that are reciprocal in nature and meet the needs of both the college and the community.

RESOURCES

To learn more about other interventions at Bunker Hill, view its profile on the Achieving the Dream website: http://www.achievingthedream.org/college_profile/555/bunker-hill-community-college

CONCLUSION

The national drive to increase college completion—both from the government and philanthropic community—has pushed communities and educational institutions to deliberately examine the supports they provide to students. Education policymakers at all levels of government play a key role in developing a college completion policy agenda and institutional leaders have the responsibility to implement these policies effectively. It is vital that programs respond to the needs of underrepresented students, and particularly, Latinos. As the second-largest population group in the United States, increasing the number of Latinos who pursue and complete a postsecondary degree is imperative for the economic vitality of this country. To respond to this need, this report identified programs geared toward improving retention and completion rates at the institutional level. These supports, delivered through a variety of programmatic approaches, help institutions move closer to eliminating achievement gaps and helping support the diverse student populations that they serve. Institutions wanting to create or improve student supports can use these programs as potential models for improvement.

In an effort to help institutions identify successful programs, we interviewed five initiatives that have either positively impacted academic readiness or designed comprehensive support services for their students. During these conversations, program leaders described the impetus of their respective initiatives and shared strategies that helped ensure its success. Although each program is quite different from the next, four common success factors emerged. The following elements can serve institutions working to strengthen their commitment to ensuring more students earn a postsecondary degree in their communities and from their institutions.

LEADERSHIP

Interviewees all stressed the importance of having strong senior leadership who could prioritize the initiative across the institution, build buy-in from appropriate departments to make processes seamless, raise funds or reorganize already existing resources needed to operate the program, and create teams dedicated to designing or steering the initiative.

PARTNERSHIPS

Interviewees agreed that creating partnerships is fundamental to any successful program. Institutions can benefit from strong partnerships, both on and off campus, by leveraging the partner's reach and expertise. For example, several institutions created partnerships with high school districts to improve the transition between high school and college. Other institutions wanted to reach specific populations (e.g., individuals facing housing insecurities, disconnected adults, etc.) and built partnerships with organizations already serving those groups. In other instances, initiatives that were unable to provide students with the needed supports due to a lack of resources relied on organizations focusing on that work (e.g., financial literacy).

STUDENT-FOCUSED

Interviewees underscored a need for administrators to understand the challenges faced by students. According to our interviews, each program took some time to understand the impediments to graduation at their own institution or community and designed the program to help students overcome those challenges. Given the multiple barriers faced by students, the initiatives all provide more than one support service, providing approaches that smooth pathways to completion as much as possible.

DATA

Many interviewees used data to show stakeholders that retention and graduation rates could be improved. Specifically, researchers showed gaps between student populations to make the case for focusing services on specific groups. Researchers also used data to pinpoint where students were struggling the most along the educational pathway. The programs would then be designed to help support students during those pivotal moments. Colleges that partner with other educational institutions found it important to create data-sharing agreements to better track students' progress from high school through postsecondary completion. Interviewees also stressed the importance of using data for program monitoring and improvement.

Collectively, these success factors should help to enhance institutions' abilities to create an effective program or strengthen an already existing initiative. We hope these strategies—proven to be successful at other institutions—will ultimately help institutions create new programs that will have a positive impact on student success and improve our national completion rate one student at a time.

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- ¹⁶ Analysis of Beginning Postsecondary Students (BPS) Longitudinal Study: 2003-04.
- ¹⁷ Analysis of Beginning Postsecondary Students (BPS) Longitudinal Study: 2003-04.
- ¹⁸ Analysis conducted by author using 2013 data found in the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) Data Explorer on <http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/naepdata/>.
- ¹⁹ In many colleges, English proficiency is tested through a reading and writing assessment.
- ²⁰ Complete College America. (2012, April). Remediation: Higher education's bridge to nowhere. Washington, DC: Author. Retrieved from <http://www.completecollege.org/docs/CCA-Remediation-final.pdf>
- ²¹ Complete College America. (2012, April). Remediation: Higher education's bridge to nowhere. Washington, DC: Author. Retrieved from <http://www.completecollege.org/docs/CCA-Remediation-final.pdf>
- ²² White students at community colleges are also placed in developmental courses at high rates (47 percent).

- ²³ Complete College America. (2012, April). Remediation: Higher education's bridge to nowhere. Washington, DC: Author. Retrieved from <http://www.completecollege.org/docs/CCA-Remediation-final.pdf>
- ²⁴ Analysis of Beginning Postsecondary Students (BPS) Longitudinal Study: 2003-04.
- ²⁵ Analysis of Beginning Postsecondary Students (BPS) Longitudinal Study: 2003-04.
- ²⁶ Pell Grants are need-based federal grants for low-income students.
- ²⁷ A profile of undergraduates at CUNY senior and community colleges: Fall 2014. Retrieved from http://cuny.edu/about/administration/offices/ira/ir/data-book/current/student/ug_student_profile_f14.pdf
- ²⁸ In 2009, based on success with the initial cohort, ASAP began admitting students with developmental education needs.
- ²⁹ Most majors other than nursing and allied health, which have prerequisites to enter the major and clinical requirements to exit, are approved by ASAP.
- ³⁰ General education and developmental courses are both offered in block schedule formats.
- ³¹ Advisors also reach out to faculty on a timed basis for feedback on student performance.
- ³² Significant increases in Associate Degree graduation rates: CUNY Accelerated Study in Associate Programs (ASAP). (2015, December 14). Retrieved from http://www1.cuny.edu/sites/asap/wp-content/uploads/sites/8/media-assets/ASAP-Program-Overview_121415.pdf
- ³³ When ASAP programs grow beyond 750 students, additional staff members such as an associate director and data coordinator are added to the team.
- ³⁴ The remaining student body breakdown is as follows: For 15 percent of students, their race is unknown; 10 percent of students identify with two or more races; five percent of students are non-resident aliens, one percent is American Indian or Alaska Native, and one percent is Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander. Percentages may not add up to 100 percent due to rounding.
- ³⁵ U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics. Tacoma Community College. Retrieved from <https://nces.ed.gov/collegenavigator/?q=Tacoma+Community+College&s=all&id=236753>
- ³⁶ National Center for Homeless Education. (2015, April). Best practices in homeless education brief series: Supporting college completion for students experiencing homelessness. Retrieved from <http://center.serve.org/nche/downloads/briefs/he-success.pdf>
- ³⁷ U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics. Lee College. Retrieved from <https://nces.ed.gov/collegenavigator/?q=lee+college&s=all&id=226204>

³⁸ The TSI Assessment is a college placement test used to determine whether or not a student will be placed in college-level courses. Any student who did not meet the SAT exemption level was provided an opportunity to test on the TSI Assessment at no cost.

³⁹ National Council on Teacher Quality. Long Beach Unified School District, California. Retrieved from <http://www.nctq.org/districtPolicy/contractDatabase/district.do?id=30>

⁴⁰ U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics. Long Beach City College. Retrieved from <https://nces.ed.gov/collegenavigator/?q=long+beach+city+college&s=all&id=117645>

⁴¹ U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics. California State University-Long Beach. Retrieved from <https://nces.ed.gov/collegenavigator/?q=california+state+university&s=all&id=110583>

⁴² U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics. Bunker Hill Community College. Retrieved from <https://nces.ed.gov/collegenavigator/?q=bunker+hill&s=all&id=165112>

⁴³ Achieving the Dream. Learning Communities. Retrieved from <http://achievingthedream.org/intervention/14640/learning-communities>

⁴⁴ This includes students who participated in boot camps during the fall and spring semesters at high school and community-based partner sites.

