

April 22, 2024

The Honorable Robert B. Aderholt
Chairman
House Subcommittee on Labor, Health and
Human Services, and Education

The Honorable Tammy Baldwin
Chair
Senate Subcommittee on Labor, Health
and Human Services, Education, and
Related Agencies

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro
Ranking Member
House Subcommittee on Labor, Health and
Human Services, and Education

The Honorable Shelley Moore Capito
Ranking Member
Senate Subcommittee on Labor, Health
and Human Services, Education, and
Related Agencies

Dear Chairman Aderholt, Chair Baldwin, and Ranking Members DeLauro and Capito,

We, the undersigned 16 organizations, representing a diverse coalition of education associations, civil rights groups, think tanks, researchers, and stakeholders with strong interest in improving college graduation rates, write to express our support for appropriating at least \$100 million **for the Postsecondary Student Success Grant (PSSG) program in Fiscal Year 2025 (FY25)**, without cutting support for other education programs. We celebrate the support demonstrated for the Postsecondary Student Success Grant (PSSG) program by Congress through the additional investment of \$45 million in the FY24 appropriations omnibus, which will enable the continued support of evidence-based strategies to improve postsecondary retention and completion rates. We are also happy to see bipartisan support for this program demonstrated through a bipartisan, bicameral authorizing bill, the Postsecondary Student Success Act, recently introduced in Congress, as well as authorizing language included in higher education legislation introduced by Chairwoman Foxx. **Increasing the investment in PSSG and the inclusion of tiered-evidence report language builds on Congress' prior commitments to get more students through college.**

Over the past several years, the economic return of a college degree compared to a high school degree has widened. However, college completion rates [have stagnated](#), with larger disparities for students from low-income backgrounds, students of color, first-generation students, and community college students. Improving college completion offers tremendous promise for increasing social mobility, tackling poverty, strengthening our workforce and economy, and reducing racial and income inequality. There are many strategies for increasing college persistence and completion, and rigorous research demonstrates that initiatives that provide comprehensive and customized supports are highly effective at moving the needle on postsecondary outcomes across a variety of regional and institutional contexts. These types of

evidence-based student support programs enhance the return [on the public investments](#) made in our nation's students and our higher education system.

Several [comprehensive models](#) of support have emerged, with each backed by an increasingly robust body of evidence. These models include Bottom Line, College Forward, CUNY ASAP | ACE, InsideTrack, National Institute for Student Success (NISS) at Georgia State University, One Million Degrees, Project QUEST, and Stay the Course. These programs have been evaluated using randomized controlled trials, which are considered the gold standard in program evaluation. The resulting strong body of evidence shows these models positively affect student outcomes such as persistence, course credit accumulation, and other leading indicators of graduation rates. Fifteen grants have been awarded through the first two competition cycles, supporting innovative projects at colleges in ten, geographically diverse states: California, Colorado, Florida, Georgia, Maryland, New Jersey, New York, Oklahoma, South Carolina, and Texas.

There are [at least 100 institutions nationwide](#) that applied to the Postsecondary Student Success Grant Program in 2022 or 2023, but were not funded due to extremely limited funds.

Increasing funding for the PSSG program to at least \$100 million will position more higher education institutions – including Historically Black Colleges and Universities, Tribal Colleges and Universities, Minority-Serving Institutions (including Hispanic-Serving Institutions), and community colleges – to increase college completion, and we encourage appropriators to do so without cutting other educational programs.

We look forward to supporting your work during the appropriations process. Thank you for your consideration of this request to invest in research-backed strategies to enhance college completion, narrow opportunity gaps, and better prepare postsecondary program completers for sustaining-wage careers that lead to a more robust economy.

Sincerely,

American Federation of Teachers (AFT)

America Forward

Association of Public and Land-grant Universities (APLU)

Complete College America

Data Quality Campaign

Higher Learning Advocates

Institute for Higher Education Policy (IHEP)

National Association of State Student Grant and Aid Programs

National College Attainment Network (NCAN)

New America Higher Education Program

Results for America

State Higher Education Executive Officers Association

The Education Trust

The Institute for College Access & Success (TICAS)

Third Way

Today's Students Coalition