



ACCESS to SUCCESS *initiative*

Rising to the Challenge

America faces two serious challenges to its long-time dominance in higher education:

- Fierce and well-financed international competition from countries determined that they – not the United States – will have the best educated workforce in the world; and
- A wide chasm within our own country in the rates at which different groups of young Americans earn college degrees.

Meeting these challenges is essential to the health of our democracy, the strength of our economy, and our nation's leadership in the world. And the two are inextricably linked: our country cannot meet the competition without dramatically expanding the college access and increasing the success of low-income and minority students.

Together, leaders of public college and university systems throughout the U.S. – collectively educating more than two million undergraduates – are stepping forward to take on these challenges.

What Will We Do?

Participating systems are aiming to improve overall student success, and to close by at least half the gaps in both college-going and college completion that separate low-income and minority students from others. Each system will choose how best to meet the goals of the initiative by 2015. But all of us will:

- Analyze our data more carefully to identify and eliminate roadblocks that slow student momentum;
- Improve student success in our developmental and introductory courses;
- Re-examine how we use financial aid and other resources, focusing on enhancing success, especially among low-income and minority students; and
- Work more closely with our K-12 counterparts to improve preparation for college.

To meet our goals, we'll need the creative energies of our faculties, the insights of our students, and strong leadership from our campus presidents.

That's what this initiative is all about—organizing our systems of higher education differently to promote student success.

What's Different About This Initiative?

We have clear and public goals for both college entry and college completion.

We are not only committed to increasing the number of students entering college, but also the number that successfully get through with a degree. This initiative is not about lowering standards, but about enabling more students to meet them.

We will report annually to the public on our progress.

Each system will collect and report data on annual progress toward initiative goals. The metrics will measure progress in at least two ways that improve on traditional measures. First, they take account of all students served, not just traditional, full-time students. Second, the metrics define a system's success not in abstract terms but in the real context of the economic and racial/ethnic diversity of its state's citizens.

Our commitment to equity—to fairer opportunities for the full range of our states' young people—is at the heart of this initiative.

“Diversity,” in other words, isn't a side goal or an afterthought. We will remain squarely focused on better serving the full citizenry of our states.



We have organized to learn from each other about what works and what doesn't.

None of the participating systems has any need to reinvent the wheel. So, we'll carefully mine our data to identify campuses or other academic units that are unusually effective in achieving support on access or success, study their accomplishments, and share best practices widely across our systems.

This is not about more programs. It's about changing the way our systems do business.

Over time, we've had lots of experience with small programs that have positive but limited impact on our students. This effort is not just about more programs. Rather, we're trying to reorganize how we do our basic work of teaching and advising students with a clearer focus on student success. We want to show that greater student success is achievable, and that it is achievable at scale.

While we'd welcome government support, we're not waiting for it.

We have no doubt that, over time, we'll need more public support if we are to meet the full needs of our states and our country. But we're not waiting, because we know that we can and must redeploy some of our own resources in ways that will increase student success.

Finally, to help us reach our goals, we've chosen a partner—The Education Trust—known for its independence, its honest reporting of data, and its willingness to speak truth to power.

Analysis, Action and Accountability

This initiative is an aggressive, highly-focused effort to increase the number of college-educated Americans overall, while closing gaps for underrepresented students. As leaders of the participating university systems, we are acutely aware that this is what America needs from higher education.

Meeting these twin goals is important to the future competitiveness and economic security of our country. But it's also terribly important to the many young people who are working hard and following all the rules, yet finding themselves unable to get a college education. Unaddressed, this will continue to have a chilling effect on the hopes and dreams of too many of our nation's children and will erode the fundamental principles of opportunity on which our nation was founded.

This initiative can help renew the promise of opportunity in America and help give all students the confidence that hard work pays off.

National Partner Organizations

NASH

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF SYSTEM HEADS

The National Association of System Heads (NASH) is the association of the chief executives of the 52 college and university systems of public higher education in the United States.



The Education Trust was created to promote high-academic achievement for all students, at all levels—pre-kindergarten through college. While we know that all schools and colleges could better serve their students, our work focuses on the schools and colleges most often left behind in plans to improve education: those serving African-American, Latino, Native American and low-income students.

Foundation Support



Lumina Foundation for Education is an Indianapolis-based, private foundation dedicated to expanding access and success in education beyond high school.

BILL & MELINDA
GATES *foundation*

Guided by the belief that every life has equal value the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation works to reduce inequities and improve lives around the world.

NASH

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF SYSTEM HEADS

www.nashonline.org

1250 H Street, N.W. Suite 700
Washington D.C. 20005
Phone (202) 293-1217
Fax (202) 293-2605



www.edtrust.org