

Beyond Traditional Scholarships

AN EXPLORATION OF HOW PHILANTHROPIC ORGANIZATIONS AND COMMUNITIES ARE PARTNERING WITH COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES TO DESIGN INNOVATIVE PROGRAMS TO SERVE UNDERSERVED STUDENTS



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ABOUT HELIOS EDUCATION FOUNDATION

Helios Education Foundation is dedicated to creating opportunities for individuals in Arizona and Florida to achieve a postsecondary education. Our work is driven by our four fundamental beliefs in Community, Equity, Investment, and Partnership, and we invest in initiatives across the full education continuum.

Through our Florida Regional Student Success Initiative, Helios is helping underserved, minority, and first-generation students from the state's large population centers in Miami, Orlando, and Tampa achieve a postsecondary education.

In Arizona, where Latino students comprise the largest percentage of the K-12 public school population, the Foundation is implementing its Arizona Latino Student Success initiative focused on preparing all students — especially students in high-poverty, underserved Latino communities — for success.

Dear Colleague,

To repeat the same action and expect a different outcome is illogical, yet numerous scholarship strategies fashioned to assist students complete a postsecondary degree repeat historic action, which has fallen short of ensuring degree completion, while hoping for a change in the result. To change the outcome, one must change the input.

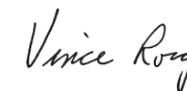
In this brief, entitled *Beyond Traditional Scholarships: An Exploration of how Philanthropic Organizations and Communities are Partnering with Colleges and Universities to Design Innovative Programs to Serve Underserved Students*, Helios Education Foundation explores creative scholarship models that meet the needs of underserved students, often by moving beyond monetary aid in the direction of wrap-around student supports. While continuing to provide financial relief for income-qualified students, a number of these programs couple academic supports along with financial assistance in order to address non-monetary needs that often impede completion.

Through partnership and collaboration, a greater number of solutions customized to meet the needs of each community will not only support students but also result in a better-prepared, more globally competitive workforce.

Sincerely,



Vince Roig
Founding Chairman
Helios Education Foundation



Paul J. Luna
President & CEO
Helios Education Foundation





BACKGROUND

Helios Education Foundation (Helios) is dedicated to creating opportunities for individuals in Arizona and Florida that promote achievement in postsecondary education. Helios focuses on investing in initiatives across the education continuum, with the goal of ensuring that all students graduate from high school ready for college and career, eventually going on to complete a high-quality postsecondary degree or certificate.

One effort that exemplifies these principles is the Community Foundation Challenge Grant for Local College Access Networks (LCAN) Development. Funded by Helios and the Kresge Foundation, the purpose of this project is to leverage local private investment, through Florida community foundations, and to engage and sustain college access coalitions, thereby increasing the college-going and postsecondary completion rates of students traditionally underrepresented in higher education.

As part of this work, the Florida Philanthropic Network (FPN) and the Florida College Access Network (FCAN) convened a small working group to explore nontraditional scholarship programs and products. Based on these discussions, researchers at Helios developed a research plan to examine the identified programs and products. This brief is the product of that work.

Rather than elucidating on every individual scholarship opportunity, Helios researchers synthesized the various programs and products identified into a set of domains that categorize the innovative, nontraditional scholarship programs being implemented. In addition to the domains, this brief also includes detailed descriptions of particular programs and initiatives (see Spotlight boxes), as well as resources for readers who wish to learn more about the various programs.



THE PROBLEM

Over time, the level of education required for jobs in the United States has steadily climbed. Research suggests it will continue to do so. By 2020, for example, 65% of all jobs in the nation will require at least some postsecondary education (U.S. Census Bureau, 2015). Yet, according to current data released by the U.S. Census Bureau (2015), only 42% of the population 25 years of age or older holds an associate degree or higher. These numbers are more troubling when we disaggregate and look at the U.S. minority population. There we observe that only 32% of Blacks 25 years or older hold an associate degree or higher, and just over 22% of Hispanics (of any race) do so (U.S. Census Bureau, 2015). These statistics lead to the following questions: How do we raise postsecondary attainment to meet our workforce needs? Moreover, how do we increase the proportion of underrepresented students (which we define as first-generation college-goers, minority, and low income) to improve overall equity in the system? Finding the answers to these questions is not an easy task. There is no magic, silver bullet or quick fix that is going to solve the problem. However, the importance of this task cannot be overstated. Increasing postsecondary attainment, particularly for students who have been traditionally underrepresented in education, seems to hold some of the greatest promise for expanding economic prosperity in this country. However, underrepresented students face a number of barriers, including the current financial aid system, when it comes to succeeding in postsecondary education.

Many aspects of the current financial aid system in the United States favor students from more affluent backgrounds. Over the last two decades, for example, there has been a shift from need-based aid to non-need, merit-based aid. By the 2007–08 academic year, more students received merit-based aid than need-based aid in both public and private four-year postsecondary institutions. As a result, the disparity between low-income and non-low-income students receiving merit-based aid has widened. From 1995–96 to 2007–08, the proportion

of students receiving merit-based aid in the highest income quartile rose by five percentage points (23% to 28%), while those from the lowest income quartile fell three percentage points (23% to 20%; U.S. Department of Education, 2011).

In addition to federal financial aid policy, over the years, many community groups and other philanthropic organizations have created scholarship opportunities for students. In some cases, the policies of these groups and organizations mirrored federal financial aid policies by focusing more on grade point average (GPA) or other merit-based requirements, while in other cases the scholarships were awarded based on other criteria, such as national heritage. Educational leaders, however, began to realize that the scholarships being offered were not having the intended impact. Interviews and literature reviews have identified two themes that help to explain this. One of the most common reasons that traditional scholarship models fail to have the desired impact is that they are not tailored to fit individual community needs. An example is when scholarship dollars simply replace other financial aid for some students but do not actually increase student enrollment. Another problem that emerged is that scholarship recipients do not receive enough funding to meet their needs. Students with unmet needs, especially from lower-income families, are less likely to enroll in college than are those students who can cover college costs (Noel-Levitz, 2007).

To remedy these issues, communities, philanthropic organizations, and colleges and universities have taken on the task of creating innovative, nontraditional scholarship models. In this brief, we highlight the four major domains of these innovative models. They include: (a) scholarships that include wraparound services; (b) emergency scholarships; (c) performance-based scholarships; and (d) promise scholarships. An additional category that includes other opportunities that do not fit into those four is also detailed. It is our hope that

by providing detailed descriptions on these innovative, nontraditional scholarship programs, people seeking to expand opportunities in their own communities will have a foundation on which to build their own models. As the report is read, we encourage readers to keep in mind the following questions:

- What is the problem you are hoping to solve?
- What community are you serving?
- How will you measure your work?

FINANCIAL AID AND SCHOLARSHIPS WITH WRAPAROUND SUPPORT SERVICES

Over the last three decades, educational leaders, including those at philanthropic organizations, have pushed for greater postsecondary access for minority, low-income, and first-generation students. To support these measures, they have created and implemented a plethora of programs aimed at helping students prepare for postsecondary education, including Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) completion support, college application programs, and scholarships. However, even with access to these supports, we continue to see lagging persistence and postsecondary completion. In Florida, for example, a recent study by the American Institutes for Research (2014) found that minority students and poorer students have lower college completion rates. In particular, only 15% of Black males who start to pursue an associate degree complete it, and only 42% who start a bachelor's degree complete it. Similarly, students from low-income families complete either an associate or bachelor's degree at a lower rate than those with more financial security do (Backes, Holzer, & Velez, 2014).

Students who drop out of postsecondary education often face numerous barriers over the course of their educational career; therefore, it is impossible to identify a single factor that results in student dropout. These barriers can stem from economic challenges (e.g., not having enough aid or support to make ends meet), family challenges (e.g., having to help take care of family members or working to support the family), or health challenges. In some cases, students just are not prepared to navigate the many facets of college life.

To better support students as they navigate the major life adjustments that come with attending college, many colleges, universities, and philanthropic organizations have begun to pair financial support with various wraparound services meant to keep students on track. Services range from providing access to peer

mentoring or health care and even include access to food pantries for students who are struggling financially. These services are designed to bridge the gap that exists between first-generation college students and non-first-generation students by providing support and guidance to promote student success.

At the heart of most scholarship programs that include wraparound services is a counselor or mentor whose main role is to provide students with the support they need to stay enrolled. A prime example is the Ann Arbor Area Community Foundation (AAACF). In 2016, AAACF launched the Community Scholarship Fund aimed at increasing college success and completion for economically disadvantaged students living in Washtenaw County, Michigan. Along with a financial award, all recipients are assigned a college success coach through Washtenaw Futures, a community network focused on making college an achievable reality for all students of Washtenaw County. The coach's role is to "support the student's transition to higher education, help students access the many opportunities available on their college campuses, and serve as a general resource for students throughout their college experience" (See generally, www.aacf.org/scholarships/scholarship-faqs).

Some wraparound programs provide services and resources that go beyond counseling and mentoring. One of the most recognized of these ventures is the Accelerated Study in Associate Programs (ASAP). ASAP is a comprehensive school program for students pursuing their associate degree at one of nine City University of New York (CUNY) locations. Under this program, not only does the school provide financial assistance and an advisor/mentor but also tutoring and waivers for tuition and other mandatory fees as well as public transportation. To date, evaluations of ASAP students have shown the program to be highly successful. For example, ASAP students graduate at more than double the rate of non-ASAP students, with an average graduation or completion rate of 53.2% compared to 24.1%, respectively (City University of New York, 2017).

While AAACF and ASAP are two strong examples of the wraparound trend, they are by no means the only models. The following Spotlight boxes highlight an Arizona program featuring comprehensive wraparound services and additional examples of financial aid with wraparound support.

SPOTLIGHT: EXCEL STUDENT SUCCESS PROGRAM AT MARICOPA COUNTY COMMUNITY COLLEGE DISTRICT, ARIZONA

To support students entering community college in Arizona, Helios Education Foundation collaborated with Maricopa County Community College District on an innovative program to provide guidance to students obtaining an associate degree and/or transferring successfully to a four-year university.

Based in part on the successful ASAP initiative at CUNY, EXCEL requires that students enroll in at least 12 credits per semester and have a minimum GPA of 2.5. Once admitted, the students must maintain a 2.5 GPA, meet with their EXCEL program coordinator at

least once a month, and actively participate in EXCEL program activities, including the Summer Institute.

As participants in the program, students are provided (a) scholarship opportunities; (b) personalized academic advisement; (c) career guidance; (d) time with a success coach to assist with time management and study and life skills; (e) learning supports, such as a laptop, calculator, and other unmet needs; (f) peer mentoring; and (g) opportunities for their family to be part of their program through family workshops.

While EXCEL is still in its early years of implementation, initial results show that those students in EXCEL persist at a higher rate than those from comparison groups.



EMERGENCY AND COMPLETION SCHOLARSHIPS

Emergency Scholarships

One of the most common reasons low-income students cite for dropping out of college is lack of financial support (Wright, Kleinberger, & Lloyd-Lesley, 2017). For many students with inadequate financial resources, a hardship as small as an inability to make a month's rent or utility payment may be enough of an impetus to discontinue studies. Once a student drops out of school, he or she may be left in an even worse position, holding student loan debt and no degree to obtain an adequate job. Even if the student intends to re-enroll in college at a later time, only a fraction actually do.

Emergency scholarships were created as an innovative solution for assisting low-income students facing unforeseen financial hardship threatening their ability to complete their education. Serving as a safety net, emergency scholarships typically consist of a one-time, small grant of \$1,500 or less that does not need to be repaid. While some emergency scholarship programs solely provide financial assistance, others go a step further by linking the student to wraparound supports at the postsecondary institution or within the community (e.g., financial literacy counseling, homeless shelters).

In 2015, approximately 100 emergency scholarship programs were operating across the country. The majority of these programs defined an emergency as an expense of a specific nature (e.g., medical costs, transportation, child care), and few allowed the student to use the funds toward expenses such as tuition, fees, or books. Despite varying eligibility requirements from program to program, the majority of these programs had several common components:

- Demonstration of financial need, such as qualification for Pell Grant eligibility;
- Completion of an application process, including documentation proving an unpredictable financial hardship;
- Accumulation of a minimum number of college credits at the time of the scholarship request; and
- Enrollment in a minimum number of credit hours (e.g., part time).

In addition to the requirements described above, some programs required the student to outline a plan for continuing through school after the emergency financial aid was used. The method for disbursing funds also varied by program, although a direct deposit to the student's bank or school account was most commonly reported. Other popular methods of disbursement included gift cards or checks payable to the student or a third party, like a landlord (Dachelet & Goldrick-Rab, 2015).

In 2008, an evaluation of the largest emergency financial aid programs to date, the Dreamkeepers and Angel Fund Emergency Financial Aid programs, was conducted by MDRC. Launched in 2005, these foundational emergency aid programs were funded by the Lumina Foundation and administered by Scholarship America and the American Indian College Fund to help community college students facing financial crisis. In the programs' first two pilot years, more than \$845,000 was awarded to over 2,400 students. Recipients of Dreamkeepers funds were more likely to be nontraditional students (e.g., older students who had children), enrolled in vocational coursework,

MORE EXAMPLES OF FINANCIAL AID WITH WRAPAROUND SUPPORT:

Suder Foundation First Scholars Program (firstscholars.org)

One Million Degrees (www.onemilliondegrees.org)

Pathways to Success (cvpts.com)

Los Angeles Scholars Investment Fund (www.calfund.org/transform-la/ccf-priority-areas/education-pipeline/los-angeles-scholars-investment-fund)

and enrolled full time. According to feedback, students and administrators believed scholarship funds increased student retention (Geckeler, Beach, Pih, & Yan, 2008). Indeed, with an average award of only \$446, 95% of students receiving Dreamkeepers funding finished the semester, and 88% enrolled the following semester (Dachelet & Goldrick-Rab, 2015).

Completion Scholarships

Failure to complete college can be especially devastating for low-income students who are close to finishing and have likely amassed a large amount of student loan debt. Completion, or gap, scholarships are a type of emergency financial aid provided to students who are close to graduating but have dropped out or are at risk of dropping out due to financial hardships. Like other

emergency scholarship programs, eligibility requirements for completion grants vary by program. To be eligible for a completion grant, programs may require the student to hold a minimum GPA (e.g., 2.0), require the student to meet with an academic advisor and obtain a memo of recommendation, and/or require the student to give back to the community or campus through service hours. Programs may also be targeted toward specific demographics of students or toward students who are majoring in a specific field.

Furthermore, approaches to providing completion scholarships to students vary across programs (Anderson & Steele, 2016). For example, institutions employing the reactive model allow students to apply for a completion grant once they have dropped out for at least one semester, fail to register for classes, or drop a course due to missed payment. The skin in the game model takes an alternative approach, offering low-interest loans to students who are close to completion but attending part time or are in their 5th or 6th year of schooling. The loan is then forgiven contingent upon graduation and possibly other criteria, such as meeting with an advisor.

In 2014, Florida International University in Miami launched an innovative completion grant program called the Graduation Success Initiative Graduation Grants Award. This grant provides first-time, full-time degree-seeking seniors with up to \$1,200 to finish their degree.

To qualify for the grant, students must have at least a 2.0 GPA and obtain a letter from their academic advisor verifying they are close to graduation and need financial support to reach the finish line.

Overall, emergency scholarship and financial aid programs, including completion scholarships, have great potential for assisting students in completing their college journey. With an increasing number of first-generation and low-income students enrolling in postsecondary institutions, a relatively small amount of support has the potential for a great impact.

FOR MORE INFORMATION ON EMERGENCY SCHOLARSHIPS:

Destination Graduation (www.seminolestate.edu/newsroom/articles/1322/Destination-Graduation-helps-students-stay-the-course)

Dreamkeepers (scholarshipamerica.org/dreamkeepers)



SPOTLIGHT: DESTINATION GRADUATION PROGRAM AT SEMINOLE STATE COLLEGE OF FLORIDA

While nontraditional students (i.e., low income, first generation, and/or veteran) currently make up the majority of the overall college population, research indicates only about one quarter of these students actually complete college within six years (Wright et al., 2017). Destination Graduation is a partnership between the Heart of Florida United Way, the Central Florida College Access Network, and Seminole State College of Florida that aims to eliminate the obstacles many of these nontraditional students face when encountering unanticipated financial hardship. The program is currently being implemented across three college campuses in Seminole County and uses both financial and nonfinancial support to bolster postsecondary retention and completion.

Destination Graduation provides assistance to at-risk students who may drop out of college for nonacademic reasons. The program provides emergency financial aid and connects students to over 2,000 wraparound community and campus supports such as housing, food pantries, public benefits, and health care. It incorporates the services of United Way’s 2-1-1 intake specialist and case manager who provide prompt, in-person assistance to connect students to the services and resources they need. For students to qualify for emergency funds, they must demonstrate that their financial hardship was unforeseen and that they will have the ability to continue with their schooling after the emergency aid has been applied.

Struggling students may become aware of the Destination Graduation program in many ways. Faculty, staff, or other students may refer them to the program,

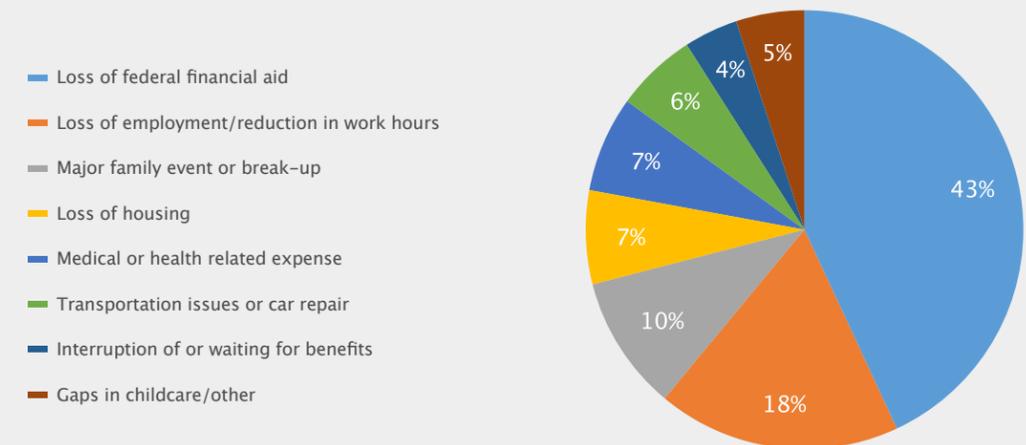
or they may be directed via targeted messaging in e-blasts and student message center. Interested students are able to meet with an on-campus 2-1-1 specialist who will assess the situation and refer to a case manager if appropriate. The 2-1-1 intake specialist, case manager, and staff at Seminole State work collaboratively to help identify students who would benefit most from the program.

An evaluation of the program during the 2015-2016 pilot year revealed the top three reasons students sought assistance from the Destination Graduation program: (a) loss of federal financial aid ¹(43%); (b) loss of employment or a decrease in work hours (18%); and (c) a financial emergency due to a major family event or breakup (10%). Additionally, the evaluation revealed that many receiving emergency supports are nontraditional students. The average age of recipients was 31; 73% were of minority racial/ethnic

backgrounds (i.e., Black, Latino, or multicultural), and over half were parents or had dependent children and indicated they were employed at least part time.

Overall, initial findings indicate Destination Graduation is effective in increasing retention rates among low-income students. For example, the re-enrollment rate (semester to semester) for students who qualified for Destination Graduation and received financial assistance was 36% higher than those who experienced a hardship but were unable to receive assistance from the program. Additionally, combining financial and nonfinancial supports had a strongly significant effect on enrollment rates. Thus, Destination Graduation’s unique approach to combining financial and wraparound supports and its committed cross-sector partnerships holds great potential for helping low-income students stay in school and achieve their goals.

Student Reasons for Destination Graduation Services

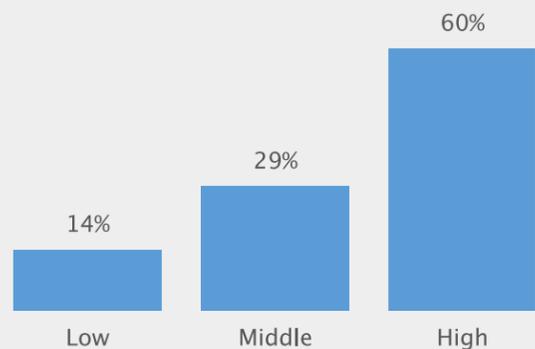


¹Title IV of the Higher Education Act authorizes financial grants, loans, and work study programs for students enrolled in institutions of higher education. These federal regulations require institutions to repay funds if students withdraw from courses, which is called return to Title IV. In addition, the regulations require students to maintain academic progress while enrolled and require colleges and universities to develop policies regarding students’ grades and pace of completion in order to maintain Title IV funds (Wright et al., 2017).

PERFORMANCE-BASED SCHOLARSHIPS

One of the greatest obstacles low-income students confront in attending college is the financial strain associated with tuition, books, fees, and living expenses. Although federal and state financial aid can ease some of this burden, many still face unmet expenses. As a result, low-income students may need to juggle school and work responsibilities to make ends meet. Stressors associated with these extra duties can negatively impact a student's ability to stay in college and attain a degree. In 2015, for example, only 14% of students from low-income families completed a bachelor's degree or higher within eight years. This compares to 29% of students from middle-income families and 60% of students from high-income families (National Center for Education Statistics, 2015).

Percentage of Students Completing a Bachelor's Degree Within 8 Years
by Income Level

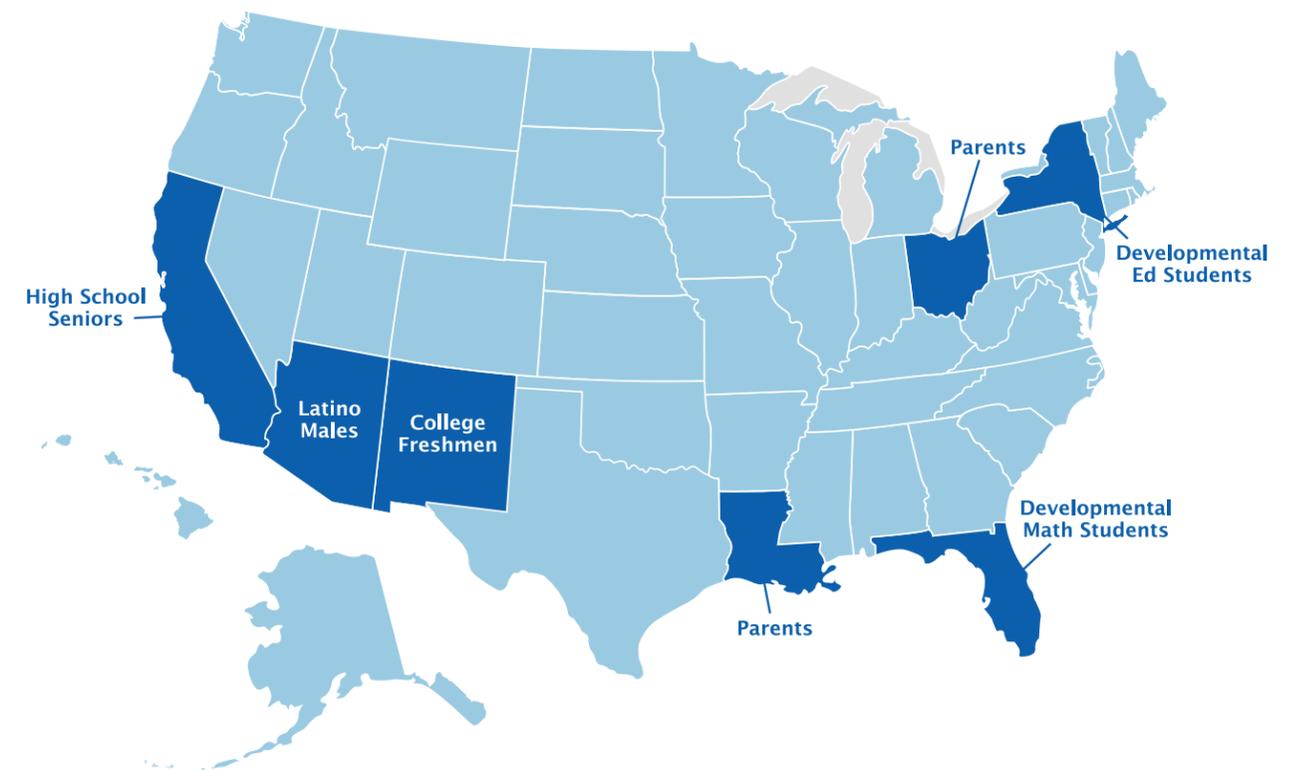


(National Center for Education Statistics, 2015)

Performance-based scholarships, an innovative method for boosting postsecondary outcomes among low-income students, were designed not only to ease the financial strain of unmet need but also to incentivize persistence from semester to semester and timely completion of a college degree. In general, students are eligible for performance-based scholarships if they meet a certain income threshold (e.g., qualify for a Pell Grant). They are then eligible to renew the aid each semester contingent on completion of a certain number of credit hours and/or attaining a minimum GPA requirement. Performance-based scholarships are “last dollar,” supplementing existing state and federal financial aid to help fill any remaining gaps.

The way in which funds are disbursed distinguishes performance-based scholarships from other more traditional financial aid. Typically, funds are distributed to students in one or two lump sums; however, performance-based scholarship programs provide smaller portions of funds at multiple points during the term. This method helps keep the student on track for academic success, encourages the association of effort and good grades with reward, and decreases the likelihood that a student will run out of money before the end of the term. Additionally, unlike many traditional types of financial aid, performance-based scholarships are distributed directly to the student with no stipulations on how the funds can be spent. Allowing low-income students to spend scholarship funds at their discretion can be particularly advantageous when everyday expenses like child care and transportation may present as potential obstacles to staying in school. Furthermore, these funds serve to reduce or eliminate the need to rely on a job as they progress through their college career (Patel, Richburg-Hayes, de la Campa, & Rudd, 2013).

Programs using a performance-based scholarship model have been implemented in at least seven states across the country: Arizona, California, Florida, Louisiana, New Mexico, New York and Ohio. While all programs encompass the key components of performance-based scholarships outlined above, elements such as student population targeted, eligibility and renewal criteria, and scholarship amount vary across settings. For example, Pima Community College's Adelante Performance Award program in Arizona focuses on increasing the postsecondary success of low-income, male Latino students. Students in the program are eligible to receive up to \$4,500 in total over three semesters, contingent upon meeting academic benchmarks and participating in student services such as advising, tutoring, and workshops. Other targeted populations for performance-based scholarships include high school seniors (the statewide Cash for College program in California); parents (Lorain, Owens, and Sinclair County Community Colleges in Ohio, and Delgado Community College and Louisiana Technical College in Louisiana); students who require developmental education coursework (Borough of Manhattan and Hostos Community Colleges in New York and Hillsborough Community College in Florida), and traditional college freshmen (University of New Mexico).



Overall, performance-based scholarships hold promise in increasing college matriculation and completion and in boosting grades and number of course credits completed. MDRC conducted multiple evaluations of performance-based scholarships using randomized controlled trials across sites in seven states, with students assigned to either a group eligible to receive performance-based scholarships or a “financial aid as usual” control group who did not receive the performance-based awards. The initial evaluation of the Opening Doors performance-based scholarship program in Louisiana revealed substantial improvements in full-time enrollment, persistence, credit accumulation, and grades for community college low-income parents who were eligible to receive the scholarships (Scrivener & Coghlan, 2011). In a subsequent, larger-scale evaluation of performance-based scholarship programs across six states (Arizona, California, Florida, Louisiana, New Mexico, New York and Ohio; Mayer, Patel, Rudd, & Routledge, 2015), findings were also positive, with performance-based aid recipients more likely to meet academic benchmarks in one or more semesters compared to those in the control group. Performance-based aid recipients were also more likely to earn more credits at most sites, and, in Ohio, they were more likely to earn a degree compared to control group counterparts. Finally, California high school students participating in the state's Cash for College program were five percent more likely to

enroll in a postsecondary institution and achieved higher grades compared to the control group. GPA effects were most pronounced among students with lower grades prior to the program's implementation.

Aid Like a Paycheck

Like performance-based scholarships, Aid Like a Paycheck is a program that distributes funds to low-income students in small disbursements at multiple points throughout the term. Initially launched by MDRC and The Institute for College Access and Success in 2008, postsecondary institutions deliver remaining aid to students in two-week increments, similar to a paycheck, after tuition and fees are paid. The goal of this program is to encourage students to associate each bi-weekly check with hard work and regular attendance—as would be required in employment. Additionally, this program seeks to instill responsible money management habits and incentivize students to remain enrolled in college to receive the entirety of their aid. Based on their work thus far, MDRC recommends recipients receive \$800 per term (i.e., \$100 per “paycheck”) for the program to have a positive impact on educational outcomes (Ware, Weissman, & McDermott, 2013).

SPOTLIGHT: MATHEMATICS ACCESS PERFORMANCE SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM

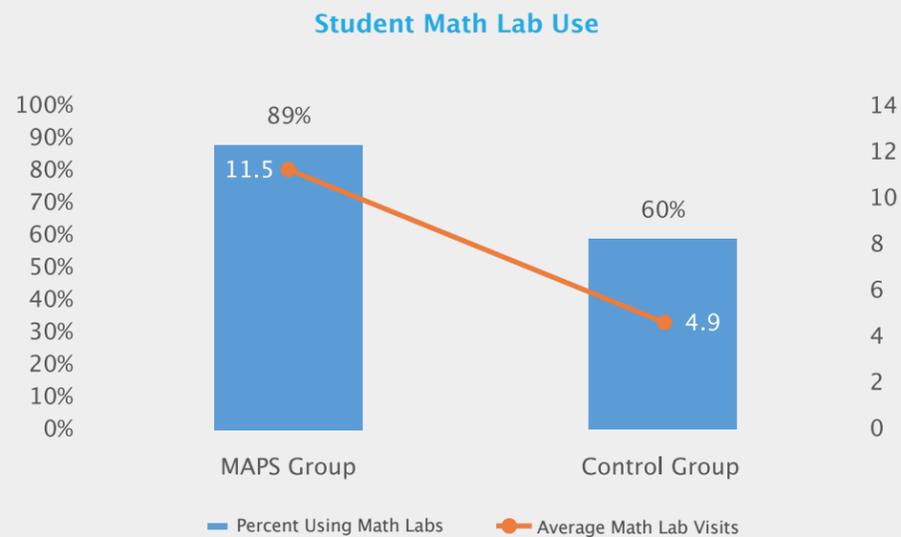
Many students begin their college career unprepared to succeed in college-level coursework. In fact, over 50% of all community college students enroll in remedial (or developmental) coursework. Many of these students are unable to pass these remedial courses and end up dropping out; only 20% of students referred to a remedial math course actually made it to a college-level math course (Bailey, Jeong, & Cho, 2010). Furthermore, a staggering 65% of low-income students entering two-year postsecondary institutions are required to take at least one remedial course (Complete College America, 2012).

The Mathematics Access Performance Scholarship (MAPS) program, launched at two Hillsborough Community College campuses in 2010, sought to address this issue with a performance-based scholarship model aimed to increase developmental math coursework completion and retention of low-income students. Students were eligible to participate in the program if they were over 18 years of age, demonstrated financial need via Pell Grant eligibility, and needed to take Beginning Algebra (Sommo, et al., 2014).

The MAPS program provides a financial incentive to low-income students enrolled in remedial coursework

for academic success and effort. Students were awarded \$600 per semester (up to three semesters) for completing a three-course math sequence, using on-campus math labs, and earning higher grades. For example, students who completed a math class with a grade of C or better received the \$600 financial incentive. Students who received a B or better were also awarded a free math textbook or book voucher for the following math course in the sequence. Awards were distributed in a gift card format, allowing students to use the aid toward expenses beyond tuition and fees. Students received \$100 at course sign-up, and the remaining \$500 was disbursed upon successful completion.

In an evaluation conducted by MDRC (Sommo, et al., 2014), students randomly assigned to the MAPS program accumulated more college credit and were more likely to complete a college-level math course or Intermediate Algebra compared to a control group. Additionally, students enrolled in MAPS were more likely to use the on-campus math tutoring labs. For example, in the first semester, 89% of students in the MAPS program visited a math lab, and the average number of visits for this group was 11.5. In comparison, 60% of the control group used the math lab during this time frame with an average of 4.9 visits.



While Aid Like a Paycheck focuses solely on existing government financial aid (i.e., Pell Grants), its components have implications for private scholarships and financial aid programs, including performance-based scholarship programs designed to help low-income students persist and complete. Students participating in an initial pilot at two community colleges in Illinois and California between 2010 and 2013 reacted positively to Aid Like a Paycheck, and findings from a large-scale evaluation in Texas are slated to be released by 2018 (Ware et al., 2013).

PROMISE SCHOLARSHIPS

While not necessarily a novel concept, promise scholarship programs have recently experienced an increase in popularity and are adapting to meet the unique needs of communities. REL West and West Ed (2016) defined promise scholarship programs as “institutional or place-based initiatives that address the challenge of higher education affordability by offering funding for students who live in the program’s geographic area” (p.3). These programs usually involve a partnership between a municipality and local philanthropists and/or businesses who agree to fund in-state public college tuition for local public high school graduates. Promise scholarships are unique in that they emphasize early awareness, ensuring students understand how the scholarship program works and what they are eligible to receive long before they apply to college. While promise programs are typically not need based, they are intended to be an opportunity for most students to gain access to funding for postsecondary education. Thus, they can be particularly beneficial to students from low-income families who may not otherwise be able to afford the costs of college. These programs are also designed to benefit the economy of the community they are implemented in, with the belief that students educated in their communities will stay and join the workforce after completing college.

Kalamazoo Promise, the first promise scholarship program, began in Michigan in 2005. This program guaranteed four years of tuition and fees at public in-state colleges or universities to Kalamazoo Public High School graduates. To date, these programs have expanded to more than 150 initiatives across 37 states and, in some instances, have been adopted at the state-level to cover community and vocational college tuition (e.g., Oregon and Tennessee).

Although all promise programs are based on the same basic premise of increasing college access to all students, key components, such as eligibility and renewal requirements, vary from program to program. Eligibility criteria may include a minimum GPA and attendance requirements, completion of college preparatory coursework, and completion of an education plan. Furthermore, many programs possess minimum stipulations for continued funding once the student has enrolled in a postsecondary institution, such as college GPA requirements, college credit hours, and completion of community service hours. Most promise programs offer funding to assist with tuition and fees, and some also provide financial assistance for additional costs, including books, transportation, and supplies (e.g., laptops). Many have also begun to incorporate innovative methods to boost student postsecondary success beyond financial aid, such as peer mentoring, counseling, early exposure to a college-going culture, and funding college savings accounts.

Research on the effectiveness of promise scholarship programs is somewhat limited at this time, but preliminary findings are positive. An analysis of the Kalamazoo Promise program revealed significant increases in college enrollment, college credits attempted, and degree/credential attainment. Enrollment effects were strongest at four-year institutions, suggesting that promise programs may induce students to select baccalaureate-granting institutions over two-year colleges. These effects were even more pronounced among female and minority students (Bartik, Hershbein, & Lachowska, 2015).

Further evidence that promise scholarship programs are on the rise can be found in the College Promise Campaign. Founded in 2015, a nonprofit organization called Heads Up America launched the initiative, which seeks to build broad support to guarantee a community college education for students across the country. Backed by former President Barack Obama, this initiative has resulted in significant growth in promise programs in the community college sector. This rapid expansion has been most noticeable in California, with the implementation of at least 23 community college promise initiatives incorporating innovative methods of boosting access, persistence, and completion.

SPOTLIGHT: LONG BEACH COLLEGE PROMISE

In 2008, the Long Beach Unified School District (LBUSD), Long Beach City College (LBCC), and California State University, Long Beach (CSULB) launched the Long Beach College Promise, one of the most established promise programs to date. The goal was to enable all eligible high school graduates from LBUSD to receive one free year of college tuition at LBCC and guaranteed admission to CSULB upon completion of minimum community college transfer requirements or college preparatory requirements.

The Long Beach College Promise focuses on creating a college-going culture as early as elementary school, with fourth and fifth grade students receiving the opportunity to tour the LBCC and CSULB college campuses. In sixth grade, students and their families are encouraged to sign a College Promise Pledge and are provided with academic planning and counseling services that continue throughout the duration of their high school career and college transition. Other key features of the program include subsidized AP exams for LBUSD high school students; the Long Beach Internship Challenge, which prescreens youth between the ages of 16 to 24 and matches them with businesses in the community; and a partnership between LBUSD, LBCC, and CSULB fostering alignment of expectations and curricula.

California is ripe for such promise programs, as the state's community colleges already have the lowest yearly tuition and fees in the country (\$1430 compared to \$3520 nationally; The College Board, 2016). Additionally, the state's low-income students are already eligible for the Board of Governors fee waiver that allows enrollment fees to be waived. While research on the effectiveness of promise programs is in its early stages, initial evaluation of the Long Beach College Promise program reveals positive outcomes. For example, the percentage of LBUSD students enrolling at CSULB has increased by 43% since the program began in 2008, and LBCC and LBUSD graduates were found to be more likely to persist at CSULB compared to other students (LBUSD, LBCC, & CSULB, 2014).

SPOTLIGHT: FLORIDA STATE COLLEGE AT JACKSONVILLE PROMISE

Florida State College at Jacksonville (FSCJ) is the first public community college in the state to join the national College Promise Campaign, aiming to serve up to 1,000 new college students each year. Beginning fall 2017, public high school graduates in Nassau and Duval counties will be able to receive a free community college education at FSCJ. Under this unique new promise program, FSCJ will cover tuition, fees, and books for students who have graduated from high school within the past 3 years, who are first-time college students, and who qualify for a federal Pell Grant. To continue receiving funding, eligible students must meet with a student success advisor and develop an Academic Degree Plan prior to the first college enrollment, maintain a 2.0 GPA, and serve 60 hours of community service. This new program aims to close the gap that traditional financial aid does not cover, allowing students to take advantage of a free two-year community college education while avoiding student loan debt.

OTHER INNOVATIVE WORK

Reverse Scholarships

As we've demonstrated, most scholarship opportunities available are considered front-end scholarships, meaning that funds are disbursed to students at the beginning of their college career. However, this structure provides little motivation for the student to return to his or her community after degree conferral. This can be particularly problematic in Rust Belt communities where economies suffer the most from an outmigration of educated citizens. In response to this dilemma, some communities have turned to offering back-end scholarships, which incentivize students to return to their communities to work through payment of their student loan debt.

The Community Foundation of St. Clair County in partnership with the Huron County Community Foundation and Sanilac County Community Foundation were the first to offer this type of back-end scholarship in Michigan, called a reverse scholarship program. This program pays off the college debt for college STEAM graduates who return to their local communities for work, with student loan payments sent to the lienholder on a quarterly basis. This program is targeted toward young individuals in their late 20s and most recently awarded a total of \$10,000 in scholarships.

Four awards were provided in the program's inaugural year of 2016, with hopes to grow to \$100,000 total within the next few years. Inspired by the reverse scholarship program in Michigan, Crawford County, Ohio, also recently announced its plan to implement the Come Home Scholarship program with the hopes of enticing college graduates to come back home to live, work, and contribute to the local economy.

Microscholarships

Microscholarships, which allow students to begin saving for their college education in high school, are another innovation in financial aid that are gaining traction. They are small awards granted to students through their high school career for academic achievements, volunteerism, and extracurricular activities. These awards help pay for college and are designed to incentivize students to earn good grades or participate in extracurricular activities that are viewed favorably by college admission staff.

Raise.me is an online resource focused on expanding access to higher education, especially among low-income and first-generation students, through microscholarships. Over 320,000 students, representing one out of two high schools in the United States, have signed up to earn microscholarships from 180 colleges and universities. Raise.me is free for students and high schools, with charitable foundations, other funders, and college partners

CONCLUSION AND NEXT STEPS

As readers can glean, a number of options are emerging to support student postsecondary education that go beyond simple scholarship giving. As a first step, we encourage organizations to collaborate with their partners in the scholarship design process. At the beginning the first question that should be addressed is: What is the problem you want to solve? For example, are you trying to increase college completion rates of poorer students, or are you trying to provide more college access? In either case, having a clear idea of the problem you want to solve is essential.

Next, we encourage you to identify the community you will serve. Are you serving everyone in a region, county, or state? Are you serving a subsection of students (e.g., first-generation or minority)? Here it is imperative to identify the community you will serve so that you can set up specific guidelines that will target this community.

Finally, in order to be able to evaluate your impact we encourage you to think about which measures you will put in place to see if your scholarship program is working. To understand this, organizations must look beyond the amount of dollars going out the door. Knowing that information is important from an output point of view, but to actually evaluate impact your measures should address change at some level. For example, are more of your recipients persisting or completing college?

As described throughout this brief, philanthropic organizations are rethinking scholarships to support students in a number of ways. And we believe that there is even more potential out there for philanthropy to have an impact. We hope that this guide will help to stimulate ways that you can use scholarships in your community.

paying a fee to have their programs represented on the online platform. Microscholarship dollars are awarded by the college partner, and students receive the aid before the beginning of their freshmen year in college.

Reentry Scholarships

The number one reason many young adults drop out of college is because of stress related to juggling school and work (Johnson, Rochkind, Ott, & DuPoint, 2009). According to research conducted by the Harvard Graduate School of Education, only 56% of students enrolled at a four-year institution finished with a bachelor's degree within six years. Findings were even more dismal for community college students, with only 30% receiving their associate degree within three years (Symonds, Schwartz, & Ferguson, 2011).

As a result, some philanthropic and community organizations have decided to focus on encouraging students who started but never finished to return to school and complete their college degree. Programs such as the Osher Reentry Scholarship program, funded by the Bernard Osher Foundation, provide financial support to individuals between the ages of 25 and 50 who have experienced an interruption in their education of 5 years or more and want to continue studies at the undergraduate level. These students must demonstrate financial need, show academic promise, and commit to degree completion.



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