

The Honorable Joseph R. Biden
President
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue
Washington, D.C. 20500

February 23, 2022

Dear President Biden,

We write to ask you to propose a bold investment in evidence-based college completion funds in your fiscal year 2023 budget request. We represent a broad and diverse coalition of civil rights, education groups and associations, think tanks, researchers, and other stakeholders with a strong interest in increasing the college completion rate nationally. While our country has made striking progress in increasing the high school graduation and college-going rates over the last two decades, college graduation rates have grown much more tepidly, and large racial gaps in persistence and completion persist.

Last year, we strongly supported the significant investment in evidence-based college completion initiatives that you proposed as part of the American Families Plan. Since then, the problem of low completion rates has been compounded by the largest drop in community college enrollment in 50 years. Taken together, these dynamics will have long-term repercussions for American economic and workforce development.

A dedicated, bold investment in proven college retention and completion programs, along with support for the development and evaluation of promising models, is needed to match the scale of the problem. Research has consistently demonstrated that college completion models that provide customized, holistic support to underserved students can have an enormous impact on students' educational trajectories.

A recent randomized controlled study of Bottom Line, a college completion program that operates in three states to help first generation, low-income students get to and through college, found that participants were 23 percent more likely to graduate with a bachelor's degree within four years than their peers in the control group. CUNY ASAP, first launched in New York City but since replicated in 6 states, has doubled college graduation rates among participants.

In another example, in 2012 Georgia State University implemented a strategic proactive advising approach that relies on analytic data to flag concerns early and help get students back on track. Since its introduction, the program has increased overall graduation rates by 9 percent and eliminated gaps in graduation rates by race, ethnicity, and income level.

Low college completion rates are not an intractable problem. Solving it will take sustained, bold investment in proven approaches and research into emerging models. We hope you will take the important step of proposing such an investment in your FY23 budget.

Sincerely,

American Association of State Colleges and Universities (AASCU)
American Association of University Professors (AAUP)

Association of Community College Trustees
American Federation of Teachers
America Forward
Association of Public and Land-grant Universities
Bottom Line
Center for First-generation Student Success
College Success Foundation
Denise Smith, The Century Foundation
Education Reform Now
Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce
Institute for Higher Education Policy (IHEP)
John Burton Advocates for Youth
NASFAA
National Association of State Student Grant and Aid Programs (NASSGAP)
National College Attainment Network (NCAN)
National Education Association
New America Higher Education Program
Results For America
State Higher Education Executive Officers Association (SHEEO)
The American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers
The Association of Young Americans (AYA)
The Education Trust
The Institute for College Access & Success (TICAS)
Third Way
uAspire
UnidosUS
Women Employed
Yes We Must Coalition

Cc:

U.S. Secretary of Education Miguel Cardona
U.S. Undersecretary of Education James Kvaal
Acting Director, Office of Management and Budget Sharlanda Young
Associate Director for Education, Income Maintenance and Labor, Office of Management and Budget,
Sherry Lachman