

National Scan of Postsecondary Attainment Practices

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Table of Contents

<i>Introduction</i>	3
<i>Baltimore Alliance for Careers in Healthcare</i>	4
<i>California’s Linked Learning Initiative</i>	7
<i>Community Education Collaborative</i>	10
<i>Credit for Prior Learning Wizard</i>	13
<i>Emergency Broadband Benefit</i>	15
<i>George Mason University / NOVA ADVANCE Partnership</i>	18
<i>Improving Access to Transportation for Postsecondary Students</i>	21
<i>Mi Casa Es Su Casa</i>	24
<i>Peer Ambassadors for FAFSA Completion</i>	27
<i>Project QUEST</i>	30
<i>SAIL – Students Accelerating in Learning</i>	33
<i>San Diego Workforce Partnership’s Income Share Agreement Fund</i>	36
<i>Seita Scholars Program</i>	39
<i>Supporting College Students’ Economic Security and Basic Needs</i>	42
<i>Way Back Warriors</i>	45



Introduction

This National Scan of Postsecondary Attainment Practices identifies practices that may inform the work of Local Educational Attainment Collaboratives (LEACs) as they develop action plans and pursue their local attainment goals. Through its community-based work across North Carolina, nclIMPACT Initiative learned the benefits of offering local collaboratives concrete examples of recognized practices that lead to impact. Replicating and adapting innovative and effective practices from other communities provides a way to “flatten the learning curve” and accelerate progress.

The scan represents a curated set of practices identified using the following criteria:

- *Practice types:* The myFutureNC Local Educational Attainment Collaboratives steering committee scanned applications from local communities interested in participating in the first cohort to understand the types of strategies that interested them, populations of focus, and identified barriers to attainment.
- *Evidence-based:* Where possible, we identified practices with randomized-control trial evaluations because they provide the most ability to assess outcomes. However, these types of evaluation are not widely available in education, largely because of the time and expense required. Therefore, we also included practices with positive impact in the form of reported outcomes and other forms of evaluation, as well as practices identified as models by national organizations.
- *Collaborative:* Local Educational Attainment Collaboratives are by definition built around partnerships, so we sought to primarily include practices that extend beyond the boundaries of a single institution or entity. We include practices led by a variety of types of organizations, including K12, higher education, non-profits, and workforce development boards.
- *Sustainable:* We include practices that continued beyond a period of initial funding, or appear on track to do so. This sustainability indicates that organizations recognize the value of the practice and integrate it systematically into the operations of those organizations involved.
- *Geographic diversity:* We included practices from a range of rural, suburban, and urban locations to mirror the geography of North Carolina communities.

Each practice profile includes links to attain additional information, and we invite readers to dig deeply into the information provided. Resources listed include reports from national organizations or evaluators that share additional lessons learned, offer implementation tips, provide broader discussions of key postsecondary attainment issues, or cite examples of other practices that may be relevant and helpful to collaborative work.



Practice	Baltimore Alliance for Careers in Healthcare
Location	Baltimore, MD (urban)
Focus	Career Pathways
Lead Organization	Non-profit w/ employer partners
Postsecondary Attainment Rate	49%
Population	593,000
Median Household income	\$50,400
Race/Ethnicity (%)	
	White 31
	African American 62
	Latino/Hispanic (any race) 5
	Asian 3
	American Indian 0.3

Practice	Baltimore Alliance for Careers in Healthcare <i>(Adult Learners & Workforce Development)</i>
Why it's Important	With more than 600,000 employees, North Carolina's healthcare sector employs more than any other, and in many places meeting the demand for healthcare workers is a struggle. At the same time, the composition of the skilled healthcare workforce does not mirror that of the state. For example, a 2012 report found that 84% of North Carolina's Registered Nurses were white, while the state's population was 63% white. <u>Demand for healthcare workers is high, and communities need a strong talent pipeline that represents its community.</u> Research also indicates that having more skilled healthcare professionals of color improves health outcomes for minority patients.
Description	The Baltimore Alliance for Careers in Healthcare (BACH) is a nonprofit created specifically to work with healthcare providers, educational institutions, and local governments to address critical healthcare professional shortages and create pathways to family-wage sustaining careers, particularly for employees of color already working in the sector. Key BACH program components are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Creating specific career maps and job sequencing with healthcare employers in the community, ● Training career coaches located in hospitals to work with entry-level employees and help them advance their careers, and



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● A BACH Fellows program that exposes rising high school seniors to healthcare careers. Every year, 60 students have a paid, six-week work experience in a hospital setting.
Context	<p>BACH evolved from initial conversations in the early 2000s between officials in the Baltimore city government, the John Hopkins Health System, and a philanthropic foundation. Together they developed a plan to establish an employer-led, systemic initiative that prepares more people for high-demand healthcare occupations. BACH launched in 2005 and now works with 80 partners across the community.</p>
Evidence of Impact and Sustainability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Over a two-year period (2017-19), BACH worked with more than 1,500 employees/students: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 88% completed their training, ○ 97% received an industry-recognized credential, and ○ 73% obtained new jobs. ✓ After initial grant support, hospitals now use their own funds to pay BACH career coaches who work to support, retain, and advance career opportunities for their employees.
How and Why this Strategy is Working	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● One of BACH’s first initiatives involved creating specific career maps with employers that outlined how lower-paid hospital workers could move into better-paying jobs, with information about the training and education needed. ● Building on the career mapping, BACH developed a career-coaching model to work with existing workers at five hospitals. Coached employees can develop an individualized development plan that encompasses their aspirations and goals, as well as plan to access services through their employer (e.g., tuition support). ● Using a career pathway and apprenticeship model, BACH helps students master new skills and move through a clearly defined sequence of jobs. For example, a typical model for participating hospitals is: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Lower-skilled hospital workers attend three months of classroom instruction to become a nursing assistant, ○ Nursing assistants can progress by spending another six months in a work-based education program to move into a nurse extender role (also called patient care technician), and ○ With additional education and training, nurse extenders can advance into other in-demand positions, such as Registered Nurses or surgical, radiology, lab or pharmacy technicians through partnerships with local colleges and through apprenticeship cohorts.

Lessons Learned	Employers report that retaining and increasing skills for entry-level healthcare workers into more advanced roles has benefits over hiring someone outside the hospital system because, among other things, the employee is already on-site, typically continues to work while advancing their career, and has been steeped in the workplace culture.
More information	Baltimore Alliance for Careers in Healthcare website Employer Roles in Building Pipelines for Middle-Skill Jobs in Health Care
Contact	Kiera McCarthy, KMcCarthy@BaltimoreAlliance.org



Practice	California Linked Learning Initiative
Location	Nine school districts across California (urban, suburban, rural)
Focus	Career Pathways & Work-Based Learning
Lead Organization	Non-profit w/ K12 Districts
Postsecondary Attainment Rate	Counties range from 23% to 51%
Population	7,300,000 across 9 school districts
Median Household income	Counties range from \$43,800 to \$99,700
Race/Ethnicity (%)	More than 75% of students in the 9 districts were students of color

Practice	California's Linked Learning Initiative <i>(K12 and Higher Education Transitions)</i>
Why it's Important	Too often students don't see strong connections between what they learn in school and what they want to do in a career, which can decrease their interest in continuing their education. Many students also have limited exposure to many types of careers that exist. Creating <u>authentic work experiences</u> and <u>helping students choose a pathway in high school gives them momentum</u> toward attaining postsecondary credentials that lead to family-wage sustaining careers.
Description	<p>Linked Learning started in California in 2009 to develop career-themed pathways for students in high school that integrate:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● College preparatory academics, ● Career-technical education courses in sequence, emphasizing real-world applications of academic learning, ● Work-based learning that provides exposure to workplaces and teaches professional skills needed to thrive in a career, and ● Comprehensive support services to help all students stay on track. <p>Linked Learning pathways align with priority industries in local areas and can take the form of stand-alone small schools or academies within larger comprehensive high schools. Since its inception, this model spread across the nation. For details, see the <u>Linked Learning Alliance</u>. Certification by the Alliance indicates that a pathway attained a certain level of fidelity to the four core components of Linked Learning described above.</p>



Context	Supported by the James Irvine Foundation, the nine districts originally funded in the California Linked Learning District Initiative varied in size and included both urban, suburban, and rural areas across the state. High school enrollment in these districts ranges from just over 5,000 students in the Antioch Unified School District to more than 185,000 students in the Los Angeles Unified School District.
Evidence of Impact and Sustainability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ A 9-year rigorous evaluation by SRI International, a non-profit research institute, found that compared with peers in traditional high school programs, Linked Learning students are more likely to graduate from high school, less likely to drop out, and earned, on average, more credits than similar students not part of Linked Learning. ✓ More specifically, SRI found that high school students with low prior achievement who enrolled in a Linked Learning pathway were: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ almost 8% more likely to graduate high school, and ○ almost 6% more likely to enroll in college, compared to similar peers in traditional high school programs. ✓ Today, there are more than 600 Certified Linked Learning pathways located in 18 states.
How and Why this Strategy is Working	<p>In depth interviews with high fidelity Linked Learning sites (see link in More Information below) reveal key strategies at both the district and school-levels associated with high quality Linked Learning pathways. At the District level, you need:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● A common vision for Linked Learning and a strong communication plan, ● A dedicated Linked Learning director who works across departments and directly with schools and local industries, ● An intentional focus on equity to make sure policies and practices give all students access to pathways, ● Support for developing work-based learning opportunities so that the burden doesn't fall entirely on pathway teachers and leaders, ● Human resources policies that help get the "right people in the right seats" to develop strong pathways, ● A coalition with industry and civic leaders, and ● A culture of continuous improvement. <p>At the school level, key strategies include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Leadership from the principal to ensure student cohorts can move through sequences of connected courses,



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Support for pathway leads who work with teachers to build curricula and organize work-based learning, ● Engaged pathway teachers with a dedicated common planning time, and ● Pathway advisory boards from industry.
Lessons Learned	<p>Work-based learning is a distinguishing feature of Linked Learning and developing the capacity to do it well takes significant commitment and the development of a broad coalition from both inside and outside of education. Sustaining a linked learning pathway requires withstanding inevitable staff turnover, either at the district level, with industry partners, or both. Otherwise, there's a risk a pathway falls apart when a key person leaves their position.</p>
More information	<p>Linked Learning Initiative website</p> <p>Lessons Learned about Linked Learning Implementation</p> <p>SRI evaluation of Linked Learning outcomes</p>
Contact	<p>Dan Storz, Dan@LinkedLearning.org</p>



Practice	Community Education Collaborative
Location	14 counties in Southeastern Indiana (small urban & rural)
Focus	Collective Impact, Talent Pipeline & Latino Outreach
Lead Organization	Non-profit w/ employer partners
Postsecondary Attainment Rate	Counties range from 19% to 46%
Population	574,000
Median Household income	\$58,500
Race/Ethnicity (%)	
	White 94
	African American 2
	Latino/Hispanic (any race) 4
	Asian 2
	American Indian 0.4

Practice	Community Education Collaborative <i>(Adult Learners & Workforce Development)</i>
Why it's Important	Cross-sector partnerships built around collective impact are powerful change agents because entrenched challenges cross the boundaries of any single stakeholder. <u>Collaboratives build connective tissue within communities</u> and help partners achieve common goals.
Description	Formed by a coalition of community stakeholders, major businesses, and area educators, the Community Education Collaborative (CEC) is a 23-year-old partnership in southeastern Indiana focused on aligning the region's community learning system with economic growth and an improved quality of life. Key components include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Economic Opportunities through Education (EoC) Network that knits together community, education, and business partners to create a stronger <i>talent system</i> across 10 counties focused on three high demand and high growth industries: advanced manufacturing, healthcare, and information technology. The network coordinates and aligns education across the region to increase postsecondary credential attainment for careers in these industries. • <i>TuFuturo</i>, a comprehensive Latino Education Outreach initiative focused on identifying and closing education gaps facing Latino communities in the region. Programs within this initiative include



	<p>College and Career Readiness Coaches and a Latino Mentor program, both of which work with students and their parents.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Other initiatives such as supporting early childhood education throughout the region, bolstering resources for mental health services for K12 students, and improving students’ performance in initial “gateway” college courses as a strategy to promote persistence.
Context	<p>The culture of collaboration in southeast Indiana goes back to early industrialists in the region who invested in the community to support economic growth. Industry continues to drive the initiative: “We are collaborating, not competing, for talent,” according to a leading employer.</p>
Evidence of Impact and Sustainability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ In the CEC’s region, significant growth in educational attainment (US Census associate degrees and above plus Lumina Foundation Stronger Nation estimate for Indiana, ages 25 to 64) in just 4 years: from 36% in 2015 to 44% in 2019 (most recent data available). ✓ More people earning credentials (defined as industry certifications awarded through regional adult education providers and postsecondary certificates and degrees awarded through regional college campuses): The region went from a baseline of 1,493 in 2015-16, to 2,440 people in 2019-20. ✓ Latino enrollment in adult education programs grew 22% in just one year, and Latino college enrollment after high school jumped from 39% to 69% in five years, between 2011 and 2016. ✓ Over its history, the Collaborative raised more than \$80 million to invest in region wide education initiatives and facilities, including a co-learning space for Ivy Tech, Purdue, and Indiana University that expands the number of engineering and other priority degrees available in the region.
How and Why this Strategy is Working	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The CEC aligns its education and training to support the skills that employers need, not for particular jobs. They emphasize it’s less about preparing individuals for specific jobs, and more about understanding and creating strong skill sets required in the region, especially to support advanced manufacturing. • The Coalition set large, population-level goals and uses its stakeholder engagement process to build out education attainment strategies for target populations, similar to customer-experience or customer-journey mapping. This population-centric approach leads to interventions better

	<p>designed than approaches created with a focus on specific institutions or programs.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The Coalition’s successful Latino education outreach initiative identified that scaling the capacity of existing Latino-focused organizations in the region made more sense than creating new entities or programs, particularly because these organizations already had high levels of trust in the Latino community.
Lessons Learned	<p>Sustained collaboration is process driven and requires stakeholder engagement. One leader from the CEC described it this way in a publication about the collaborative created by the Institute for Higher Education Policy: “Imagine two different approaches: transactional versus relational. The transactional mindset is an attempt to sell things and create buy-in; convincing people in a transactional way that ‘if you do this, then you’ll receive these kinds of benefits.’ A relational approach, on the other hand, produces social capital that can be used to approach any number of community challenges in the future. When it comes to community collaboration, the process is the product. . . We believe relationships are the foundation to effective community partnerships.”</p>
More information	<p>CEC's website</p> <p>CEC guidebook created by the Institute for Higher Education Policy</p> <p>This piece briefly describes CEC's approach to collective impact</p>
Contact Information	<p>Kathy Huffman, khuffman@econetworks.org</p>

Practice	Credit for Prior Learning Wizard -- South Central College
Location	Mankato and Faribault, MN (rural)
Focus	Credit for Prior Learning
Lead Organization	Community College
Postsecondary Attainment Rate	42%
Population	13,700
Median Household income	\$53,200
Race/Ethnicity (%)	
	White 96
	African American 1
	Latino/Hispanic (any race) 7
	Asian 0
	American Indian 0.8

Practice	Credit for Prior Learning Wizard – South Central College <i>(Adult Learners & Workforce Development)</i>
Why it's Important	Many adult learners bring skills and training directly relevant to their program of study in college yet receiving college credit that recognizes this learning remains unusual. These conditions create a setback for students because <u>earning credit for prior learning accelerates students toward their credential</u> , saving them time and money as they work toward a degree. A 2015 study, for example, found that community college students who had Credit for Prior Learning (CPL) were twice as likely to complete their degree compared to students with no CPL.
Description	<p>Credit for Prior Learning is not new, and in some environments, it works quite well. For example, students who pass advanced placement (AP) exams in high school frequently receive college credit. However, for other students, often adults, the process of recognizing prior learning from, for example, corporate or military training, is clunky and infrequent.</p> <p>South Central College, which has campuses in Faribault and Mankato, MN, developed a Credit for Prior Learning Wizard through support from a grant from the US Department of Labor. Launched in 2016, this online tool guides students to identify learning and experiences that might count for college credit. The resulting information is shared with a dedicated advisor who connects the student with a faculty member to assess their learning and determine appropriate college credit more fully.</p>



Context	South Central College is a two-year college enrolling 2,700 students on its two campuses in Faribault and Mankato, MN—both small communities located about 50 miles south of the Minneapolis-St. Paul metro area. The college played a leadership role in developing Minnesota’s statewide framework for Credit for Prior Learning as part of efforts to improve degree attainment for adult learners.
Evidence of Impact and Sustainability	✓ South Central created credit equivalencies for military experience that now appear in Minnesota’s statewide Veterans Education Transfer System (VETS). When veterans input their information, it lets them know the credit they will receive for their learning and training at any Minnesota state college, as well as career pathways with which the credits align.
How and Why this Strategy is Working	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The Credit for Prior Learning Wizard guides students through a small set of questions to inform the college about their prior knowledge and college programs of interest. Completing the CPL Wizard takes an average of 20 minutes, after which the student connects with an advisor to continue the process. ● Faculty-led professional development opportunities helped bring faculty and staff at South Central to a similar understanding of what CPL is and how it may benefit both students and the institution. ● Importantly, the college embedded automatic credit for industry-recognized credentials into programs in advanced manufacturing and healthcare. The faculty examined competencies included in these industry-recognized credentials and aligned them with their programs. Now, after students earn industry-recognized credentials, they automatically get credit for classes.
Lessons Learned	The college tapped faculty champions to promote the work and together with college leadership they ensured that faculty reviews of CPL portfolios and assessments were factored into their workload, not tacked on as an “extra” responsibility. This approach created a sustainable and systemic foundation for CPL, with the goal of becoming part of the college’s culture.
More information	South Central College's Credit for Prior Learning website CPL Implementation Guide created by South Central College
Contact	Jennifer Fager, jennifer.fager@southcentral.edu

Practice	Emergency Broadband Benefit for Low-Income Households <i>(Community Partnerships & Foundational Supports)</i>
Why It's Important	The COVID-19 pandemic increased the spotlight on the importance of a high quality, fast connection to the internet for students. Many communities recognize that to increase the number of students who access and complete postsecondary credentials, they <u>must address barriers for the many students who cannot secure affordable and reliable internet service</u> . For example, a recent national survey asked community college students why they decided not to enroll in the fall 2020 semester, and nearly one-fifth said they did not have the technology or internet access needed to take classes online. A December 2020 poll by Thirdway, an education policy group, found 28 percent of college students reported not always or often having fast and reliable internet, and more than half cited significant costs as an issue.
Description	<p>In Spring 2021, the federal government launched a new Emergency Broadband Benefit (EBB) credit through Internet Service Providers for low-income households. Eligible households can receive:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Up to \$50 per month discount for broadband service, ● Up to \$75 per month discount for households on qualifying Tribal lands, and ● A one-time discount of up to \$100 for a laptop, desktop, or tablet purchased through a participating provider. <p>Eligible families are those that meet one of the following criteria:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Receive benefits under a free or reduced-price school lunch program or school breakfast program, ● Experienced a substantial loss of income during the pandemic and had a total 2020 income at or below \$99,000 for single filers, or \$198,000 for joint filers, ● Include a student who received a federal Pell Grant in 2020-21, or ● Meet the eligibility criteria for a participating internet provider's existing low-income or COVID-19 program. <p>While longer term broadband access solutions are necessary, the Emergency Broadband Benefit is an important \$3.5 billion federal investment to improve connectivity across the nation.</p> <p>The NC Department of Public Instruction is also testing new innovative broadband technologies that address the homework gap for rural students. An initial report from the Friday Institute is listed under More Information.</p>



Context	<p>According to the state’s Broadband Infrastructure Office, North Carolina set a goal to raise the percentage of high-speed internet subscriptions from 73% to 80%, and to reach equity goals by increasing adoption rates to 80% across all racial subgroups:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Native American (currently 57%) ● Black: (currently 64%) ● Latino: (currently 68%) ● White: (currently 76%)
Evidence of Impact and Sustainability	<p>The Emergency Broadband Benefit (EBB) was implemented in May 2021 as part of federal COVID-19 recovery funding. No impact data is yet available. It is not known if this program will be extended after the 2021-22 year, and it will be important for communities (as well as the state and federal governments) to work with Internet Service Providers on longer term support for students who need broadband access to succeed in college.</p>
How and Why this Strategy is Working	<p>Early in the 2021-22 academic year is a very important window to promote the EBB to families and students. Outreach materials and suggestions are available from the NC Broadband Infrastructure Office. Strategies include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Insert outreach materials in community mailings, such as utility bills, school board notifications, library notices, and church bulletins. Also post them in community hubs, such as libraries, coffee shops, schools, and places of worship. ● The National Digital Inclusion Alliance shares tips for the EBB as well: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Partner with public agencies, community-based organizations, 211 and 311 helplines, and local media, ○ Customize outreach materials with local information and translate them as needed, ○ Work with organizations serving populations less likely to have home broadband service, ○ Maintain a list of local internet providers participating in the Emergency Broadband Benefit Program, and ○ Request local internet providers' reports on marketing, outreach, application support progress, and enrollment numbers.
Lessons Learned	<p>Use social media channels to promote the EBB, but do not expect that these channels will engage your target populations. Consider the outreach strategies identified above.</p>
More information	<p>NC Broadband Infrastructure Office EBB Promotional Materials</p> <p>FCC's list of Internet-Service Providers in NC participating in EBB</p>



	<p>Sample Promotion: University of MN's EBB info page</p> <p>North Carolina Rural Student Home Internet Access Pilot Program: Initial Report</p>
Contacts	<p>EBB: Nate Denny, nate.denny@nc.gov</p> <p>Pilot internet technologies for rural students: Ray Zeisch, rlzeisz@ncsu.edu</p>



Practice	George Mason University / Northern Virginia Community College ADVANCE Transfer Partnership
Location	Northern Virginia (suburban)
Focus	Seamless Transfer Partnership
Lead Organizations	Community College and 4-year University
Postsecondary Attainment Rate	Counties range from 49% to 81%
Population	3,100,000
Median Household income	\$117,600
Race/Ethnicity (%)	
	White 67
	African American 12
	Latino/Hispanic (any race) 14
	Asian 13
	American Indian 0.3

Practice	George Mason University / Northern Virginia Community College ADVANCE Transfer Partnership <i>(K12 and Higher Education Transitions)</i>
Why it's Important	Every year about 10,000 NC community college students transfer to a UNC campus. Of those students who transfer with a two-year associate degree, only about one-third earn their bachelor's degree two years later. Another third graduate after three years, and, unfortunately, four years after transferring, more than a quarter still have not finished their degree. While part-time attendance contributes to these rates, <u>most transfer students are not graduating on time, and too many are not graduating at all.</u> A key challenge facing transfer students is that while their credits technically transfer, they often do not fulfil a program requirement for their major, meaning they must complete more required classes at their transfer institution. Stronger transfer partnerships and aligned pathways between four-year universities and community colleges propel more students toward their desired degree more quickly.
Description	Launched in Fall 2018, the ADVANCE transfer partnership offers more than 85 structured curricular pathways between Northern Virginia Community College (NOVA) and George Mason University (GMU). Core aspects of the program for students are:



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● No additional application—students in ADVANCE seamlessly transfer to GMU with no additional application required, ● Specialized, aligned curriculum to ensure all credits transfer toward a student’s selected degree program, and allowing some students to take certain classes at GMU while enrolled at NOVA, ● Dedicated success coaches who stay with students even after they transfer from NOVA to GMU, providing continuity of support, ● Access to recreational facilities, sporting, and cultural events at both NOVA and GMU through all four years, and ● Specific internship and co-curricular experiences as part of ADVANCE career services.
Context	<p>George Mason University and Northern Virginia Community College are located in the densely populated Virginia suburbs outside of Washington, DC. GMU is a public research university with about 37,000 students, 45% of whom are students of color. NOVA enrolls more than 70,000 students across its seven campuses, about 60% of whom are students of color. Both colleges serve many students who recently arrived in the nation or are children of immigrants.</p>
Evidence of Impact and Sustainability	<p>✓ While it’s too early to have 4-year graduation rates, the partnership reports that so far more than 1,800 students enrolled in ADVANCE pathways to GMU. The program succeeds in attracting economically and racially diverse students seeking a four-year degree:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 60 percent are students of color, ○ 61 percent are Pell-eligible (meaning they come from a low-income household), and ○ 48 percent are first-generation college students.
How and Why this Strategy is Working	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● NOVA emphasizes to high school seniors the affordability of an ADVANCE pathway — starting at the community college with its lower tuition substantially reduces the cost of a bachelor’s degree and if students stay on track, they can still graduate in four years. ● Through ADVANCE, NOVA and GMU streamlined both their admissions and financial aid processes to create a single administrative process, and scholarship opportunities are available to eligible students. ● The fact that all ADVANCE students receive a George Mason identification card when they join the program, not only gives them access to resources such as athletics, health, well-being, and career services, but also makes them feel like part of the GMU student community from the beginning of their postsecondary experience.



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Employers are offering experiential learning opportunities, such as internships, specifically for ADVANCE students. They see value in growing a more diverse talent pipeline in the region, particularly because of growth in the technology sector in the region and a high demand for skilled workers.
Lessons Learned	<p>Leaders at the institutions suggest the following success factors for creating a tight partnership between the community college and the four-year university:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Institutional leadership committed to creating a comprehensive strategy with an investment of resources to support the partnership, Empowering faculty from both institutions to work together and giving them time and space to create the aligned curricular pathways, and Setting up holistic support for ADVANCE students to connect them to the resources they need to be successful.
More information	<p>ADVANCE website</p> <p>Reimagining Transfer for Student Success</p>
Contact	<p>Steve Partridge, spartridge@nvcc.edu</p>



Practice	<p>Improving Access to Transportation for Postsecondary Students (various models) <i>(Community Partnerships & Foundational Supports)</i></p>
Why it's Important	<p>Access to reliable, convenient, and affordable transportation is a consistent challenge for many students, especially in rural communities where public transit options are typically very limited: nationally, 4% of rural households use public transit compared to 31% of urban households. <u>Identifying and implementing community solutions to improve transportation options for postsecondary students is critical</u> in many parts of North Carolina so that residents are not deterred from pursuing a credential based on transportation barriers.</p>
Description	<p>There are a number of practices that communities pursue to improve transportation access to colleges and universities. <u>Because transportation solutions need to be tailored to community needs, rather than including a single practice in this scan, here are several innovative approaches for improving transportation access for students:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Flex-route models for public transit, also called “microtransit,” are new approaches to public transportation that focus less on fixed route buses and more on on-demand services, including “pick up” apps that residents can use to request a ride. In Austin, TX, for example, the transit system uses mobile on-demand apps for transit access in six outlying rural communities. Vehicles can accommodate riders with disabilities, including wheelchairs. ● Voucher programs such as those at North Shore Community College or the RIDE Flex program run by the Mass Bay Transportation Authority, both of which are in Massachusetts, subsidize Uber or Lyft rides for eligible individuals. ● Gas gift cards for low-income students provided by Lorain Community College as part of its SAILS program to help students pay their transportation costs. (See the SAILS practice summary in this scan.)
Context	<p>When developing transportation solutions for a community, experts recommend collaborating with community organizations and stakeholders and including the target population’s voice in the conversation. These organizations can also assist with promoting and marketing new transportation services.</p>

<p>Evidence of Impact and Sustainability</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ North Shore Community College reports that it is less expensive to subsidize Uber rides than operate shuttles to the campus from transportation hubs—\$40,000 annually compared to estimated \$100,000 for shuttles—and that students’ travel time has been reduced. ✓ Mass Bay Transportation Authority finds higher customer satisfaction rates from its RIDE Flex customers compared to traditional transit services. ✓ Austin’s Pickup service is popular with residents and is expanding to additional less populated parts of its service area.
<p>How and Why this Strategy is Working</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Using the brand, “Pickup,” the City of Austin created discrete ride zones in its outlying areas where residents can request a ride via a transit app and pay only \$1.25, the same as bus fare. Instead of fixed bus routes, the city uses smaller vehicles and a “rideshare” model similar to UberPool. The goal is for pick up to occur within 15 minutes of a resident’s request. ● North Shore Community College identified a gap between the end of transit routes and one of its campus locations. The college forged a partnership with Uber to subsidize rides to that campus from area transportation hubs. Students receive a \$10 discount on each ride. ● Eligible participants in Mass Bay Transportation Authority’s RIDE Flex program receive a monthly allotment of subsidized rides on Uber or Lyft. The rider has a co-pay for each trip, typically \$3. This example is a community program not specifically tied to a college or university; however, it could be adapted for rides to campus for students who need transportation assistance. ● Lorain Community College offers a \$50 monthly gas card to students in its SAILS program as part of its comprehensive support structure for students.
<p>Lessons Learned</p>	<p>While these models can be adapted for urban, suburban, and rural environments, if pursuing a partnership with a ride app company such as Uber or Lyft, rural communities need to consider the average distance/cost of rides to campus in their community as well as whether there is regular availability of drivers working for the app.</p>
<p>More information</p>	<p>Promising Practices for Rural Transportation Access</p> <p>Austin, TX's Pickup website</p> <p>North Shore CC - Uber partnership</p>

	RIDE Flex program in MA
Contact	See program links above



Practice	Mi Casa Es Su Casa – Lone Star College
Location	Houston, TX (urban)
Focus	Latino Student Success
Lead Organization	Community College
Postsecondary Attainment Rate	39%
Population	2,300,000
Median Household income	\$52,300
Race/Ethnicity (%)	
	White 57
	African American 23
	Latino/Hispanic (any race) 45
	Asian 7
	American Indian 0.3

Practice	Mi Casa Es Su Casa -- Lone Star College- North Harris Campus <i>(Special Populations)</i>
Why it's Important	North Carolina's Latino population has grown 25% in the past decade and now totals about 1 million. Almost 18% of students in North Carolina public schools are Latino, and in 2019, a survey found 71% of Hispanic students intended to attend college, compared to 81% of all students. <u>Strategies to help Latino students access and complete a postsecondary credential are critical to many communities in the state working to reach postsecondary attainment goals and employer workforce needs.</u>
Description	<p>Started in 2017, <i>Mi Casa Es Su Casa</i> meets the needs of a growing Hispanic student population at Lone Star College in Houston. Mi Casa's goal is to increase the persistence, graduation, and transfer rate of Hispanic students on campus. Three key efforts comprise the program:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The college created physical spaces on its campus called Information Technology Enhanced Multidisciplinary Academic Learning Lounges. These collaborative and active learning environments promote student engagement and increase both cognitive and non-cognitive skills. Some of the resources available to students include a multi-media design studio, a career lab that helps students research jobs and practice interviews, and a space called Library 2.0 which lets students design and test new products.



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Recognizing that pedagogy impacts student success, the program developed an effort called MATCH —Meaningfully Aligned Targeted Courses for Hispanic Students—to ensure that Hispanic students receive best fit instruction based on proven methods. ● The college’s Center for Academic Success and Transition has specific tutoring, career counseling, and transfer/graduation support services for Hispanic students.
Context	<p>Lone Star College’s North Harris campus is located in the suburbs of Houston, TX and serves about 16,000 students. Approximately half of the college’s students are Latino; however, prior to this initiative they had some of the lowest success rates on campus. The college successfully applied for a \$2.5 million, five-year Title V grant from the US Department of Education to kickstart the <i>Mi Casa Es Su Casa</i> program.</p>
Evidence of Impact and Sustainability	<p>✓ <i>Mi Casa Es Su Casa</i> was recognized by the national organization <i>Excelencia</i> in Education! as a top practice of 2020 for Latino student success. Outcomes for the program include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ <u>Persistence</u>: In fall 2019, 68% of Latino program participants persisted from first to second year compared to the institutional average of 50%, ○ <u>3-year graduation</u>: Of <i>Mi Casa</i>’s Fall 2016 cohort, 20% of Latino program participants graduated within 3 years compared to the institutional average of 7%, and ○ <u>3-year transfer</u>: Of <i>Mi Casa</i>’s Fall 2016 cohort, 12% of Latino program participants transferred within 3 years compared to the institutional average of 6%.
How and Why this Strategy is Working	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The program’s Summer Math Bridge Program prepares graduating high school seniors the summer immediately following high school graduation for math courses required to meet their academic and career goals. ● The college uses a Writing Across the Curriculum approach in its history and government courses to work with Latino students to conduct primary research and write about their family’s local history and experiences. This approach fosters connections between students’ lives and their learning experiences, with the goal of increasing students’ engagement in education. ● The college created PUENTE, a specific support and transition program that helps students adjust to college life and prepare for transfer to a four-year university.



Lessons Learned	Mi Casa recently implemented a Hispanic Parent Academy that reaches out to parents of students to help families understand and navigate the college experience. The college started this important support for first-generation families who may be unfamiliar with postsecondary institutions' operations and expectations.
More information	Mi Casa Es Su Casa website Mi Casa Es Su Casa Program Description
Contact	Laura Yannuzzi, laura.yannuzzi@lonestar.edu



Practice	Peer Ambassadors for FAFSA Completion – Fort Wayne Community Schools
Location	Fort Wayne, IN (urban)
Focus	FAFSA Completion
Lead Organization	K-12 School District
Postsecondary Attainment Rate	41%
Population	270,400
Median Household income	\$49,400
Race/Ethnicity (%)	
White	73
African American	15
Latino/Hispanic (any race)	9
Asian	5
American Indian	0.2

Practice	Peer Ambassadors for FAFSA Completion – Fort Wayne Community Schools <i>(K12 and Higher Education Transitions)</i>
Why it's Important	The federal Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) is the primary way students gain access to federal, state, and institutional financial aid that helps them pay for college. Implementing FAFSA completion efforts is relatively low-cost, and research finds that <u>90% of students who complete their FAFSA enroll in college compared to 50% of those students who do not complete it.</u> Nationally, nearly one-third of high school seniors from low-income backgrounds did not complete the FAFSA in 2018.
Description	Fort Wayne Community Schools, a public school district located in northern Indiana, started a peer-to-peer FAFSA completion effort in 2018. Under the program, guidance counselors choose five FAFSA ambassadors from each high school to help increase their school's FAFSA completion rate. These students are typically seniors actively involved in student groups with leadership positions. Ambassadors motivate their peers to complete the FAFSA and are incentivized by both between and within-school competitions and rewards such as gift cards. Key activities for Ambassadors each school year include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● FAFSA Kick-Off Event with banners and a school FAFSA Thermometer to track the school's progress toward its completion goal,



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● “Shout outs” by Ambassadors on social media and in senior classrooms along with in-school announcements and flyers, ● A school-wide incentive, selected by students, for reaching the school’s FAFSA goal, e.g., “pie in the principal’s face;” ● One-on-one conversations with peers and special FAFSA completion events, ● Gift card rewards for ambassadors in the high school that increases its school’s FAFSA completion rate the most in the academic year, and ● An end of year celebration with district and community leaders to honor success.
Context	<p>The Fort Wayne Community Schools district has about 29,000 students and five high schools. The district decided to pursue grant support through the National College Access Network’s (NCAN) second FAFSA Completion Challenge. NCAN invited cities with populations over 100,000 and lower than average FAFSA completion rates to apply, and a selection committee awarded grants to 25 cities. These grantee cities were led by a mix of school districts, postsecondary institutions, community-based organizations, and foundations.</p>
Evidence of Impact and Sustainability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Fort Wayne saw its FAFSA completion rate increase almost 5% in just one academic year after the new program started. ✓ A recent evaluation supported by the National College Access Network examining FAFSA completion identified these as the most impactful strategies, all of which are found within Fort Wayne’s peer ambassador effort: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ One-on-one assistance with students, ○ Peer advising, ○ Competitions to generate excitement and interest, and ○ Incentives.
How and Why this Strategy is Working	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Peer Ambassadors do not actually help students complete their FAFSA form; their role is to build awareness and excitement and to connect students to completion assistance. ● Students often find they can complete a significant portion of the FAFSA on their own, but they need parents/guardians to finish the form and provide financial information. Therefore, it’s important that peer advising is paired with outreach and events that include families and offer tailored assistance to parents/guardians.

Lessons Learned	Fort Wayne and other cities taking part in the FAFSA Completion challenge learned there are many myths and misperceptions among families about what the FAFSA is and why it's important. Beyond building awareness about the importance of FAFSA, it's also worth community level engagement targeted to specific populations to boost the number of students who complete the FAFSA. Trusted community partners can be valuable allies in reaching specific populations.
More information	Slide deck about Fort Wayne Peer Ambassadors for FAFSA Evaluation of FAFSA Completion Strategies
Contact	Shenita Bolton, Shenita.bolton@fwcs.k12.in.us



Practice	Project QUEST
Location	San Antonio, TX (urban)
Focus	Career Pathways for Adult Learners
Lead Organization	Non-profit
Postsecondary Attainment Rate	37%
Population	1,500,000
Median Household income	\$52,500
Race/Ethnicity (%)	
White	80
African American	7
Latino/Hispanic (any race)	64
Asian	3
American Indian	0.8

Practice	Project QUEST <i>(Adult Learners & Workforce Development)</i>
Why it's Important	Most new jobs in today's economy require some type of postsecondary credential, and many sectors need more highly skilled workers. It's important to <u>connect adults to education</u> , allowing them to upskill and attain credentials that lead to in-demand careers that pay family-sustaining wages.
Description	<p>For more than 25 years, Project QUEST has helped more than 7,000 low-income adults start and complete education pathways leading to in-demand careers in San Antonio, TX. Project QUEST is a community collaborative that combines the resources of the federally supported workforce system, community colleges and training institutes, the City of San Antonio, and employers to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Identify in-demand, promising wage occupations in the regional economy, ● Recruit talent through community groups, libraries, churches, etc., ● Determine eligibility: applicants must be unemployed/underemployed, hold a high school diploma or GED, and commit to working at least 18 months post participation, and ● Complete an interview and intake process that includes two assessments: one for academic readiness and one to help potential participants identify career interests and suitability. <p>Once accepted, participants:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● As needed, take part in tailored academic preparation.



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Start a one- to two-year postsecondary program linked to specific sectors with promising wages: healthcare, information technology, energy, and manufacturing. Tuition scholarships and support services such as childcare, transportation, and utility assistance are offered so that participants focus on education. ● Take part in weekly meetings with Project QUEST to stay motivated and on track. ● Receive support from a case manager to assist with roadblocks and to develop work readiness, time management, financial planning, and other skills.
Context	<p>San Antonio is located in southern Texas next to the Rio Grande River. It is worth noting that the strong evaluation results from Project QUEST stand apart from similar training programs, both in their magnitude and the long-lasting nature of wage gains among participants. Evaluators suggest paying attention to the combination of approaches and supports for students; “cherry picking” certain aspects to implement may undermine results.</p>
Evidence of Impact and Sustainability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Almost 90% of program participants complete their postsecondary credential. ✓ A randomized control study found that after 4 years Project QUEST students earned almost \$4,000 more a year than individuals in the control group. This grew to more than \$5,000 in higher wages per year nine years after completing the program. ✓ Project QUEST finds a five-year return on investment of \$19 for every \$1 invested. These returns are in the form of increased spending in the local economy from participants and reduced public benefits. ✓ In 2020, San Antonio residents approved a measure to use 1/8 of a cent sales tax revenue to support Project QUEST. Over the next three years, it will generate \$38 million a year for tuition scholarships up to \$10,000, wraparound services and coaching, and emergency aid.
How and Why this Strategy is Working	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● In the 1990s, after seeing local employers recruiting workers from outside the region to fill high demand positions, two community organizations partnered with employers and the City of San Antonio to start Project QUEST. These partners continue to collaborate, alongside postsecondary institutions and private foundations. Project QUEST staff identify and support students while they pursue their credential, usually at a community college. The City is an important financial partner, and employers vet education programs and help with job placement.



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project QUEST recognizes that low-skill adults need more than financial assistance to complete their credential. More than 80% of the program’s cost per participant goes toward wraparound supports and coaching for adults. Program leaders say that while some find this figure high, they directly attribute the long-term wage gains for participants to the investment. A coach works closely with students to address any roadblocks they encounter.
Lessons Learned	Evaluation experts examining the sustained long-term positive outcomes for Project QUEST participants believe its focus on key regional sectors and in-demand jobs has been a critical success factor. Project QUEST staff continually examine labor market data to determine which career pathways to offer and work closely with employers to ensure graduates are competitive in the job market.
More information	Project QUEST in San Antonio Workforce Measure on the Ballot Nine Year Gains: Project QUEST's Continuing Impact
Contact	Lelani Mercado, Lelani@questsa.org



Practice	SAIL (Students Accelerating in Learning) – Lorain County Community College
Location	Lorain, OH (rural)
Focus	Student Success & Supports
Lead Organization	Community College
Postsecondary Attainment Rate	38%
Population	309, 833
Median Household income	\$58,400
Race/Ethnicity (%)	
White	86
African American	9
Latino/Hispanic (any race)	10
Asian	1
American Indian	0.4

Practice	SAIL (Students Accelerating in Learning) — Lorain County Community College <i>(College Affordability)</i>
Why it's Important	In North Carolina, only 54% of first-time community college students meet the state's completion metric that indicates they graduated, transferred, or are still enrolled after four years. National research indicates that <u>college affordability and part-time enrollment are both barriers to completion</u> . The latter at least partly stems from the fact that the longer it takes to finish a credential, the more opportunity there is for "life to get in the way" causing a student to stop-out.
Description	In 2014, Lorain County Community College launched Students Accelerating in Learning (SAIL), a comprehensive student success program that substantially improves persistence and graduation rates among low-income (defined as Pell eligible) students. Given its positive results, Lorain is expanding the program to eventually serve most of its low-income student population. The program is a rural-based replication of CUNY's proven Accelerated Study in Associate Program (ASAP) model in New York City that more than doubled graduation rates. SAIL serves about 400 students a year, with plans to expand to 1,000 within the next few years. SAIL components include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Full-time enrollment for program participants.



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Financial support that pays the gap between financial aid and tuition, plus textbook vouchers and a \$50 monthly gift card to help with gas and groceries. ● A dedicated advisor, with a caseload that typically does not exceed 150 students, who connects students to academic supports and helps with personal issues that arise. Students are required to meet with their advisor twice a month and with a career services staff member once a semester. Advising sessions include pre-set topics such as goal setting, time management, and study skills. ● Course enrollment practices that place SAILS students with each other in at least some classes, bolstering a sense of community.
Context	<p>Lorain County Community College, located in southeast Ohio, enrolls about 11,000 students. One difference between SAIL and the ASAP program in New York City is that SAIL students are more likely to be older and non-traditional students, some with children.</p>
Evidence of Impact and Sustainability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ MDRC, a nonprofit, nonpartisan education and social policy research organization, completed a rigorous random-control evaluation of the SAIL program (along with implementation at two other Ohio community colleges and CUNY’s longer standing ASAP program). Among the findings to date: After 3 years, there were large effects on enrollment and credit accumulation. The study found 35 percent of Ohio students in the program group had earned a degree, compared with 19 percent of students in the control group, an increase of 16 percentage points. ✓ The college received an initial grant to start SAIL; however, over the first three years of implementation, the college increasingly covered program costs, redirecting some institutional funds. As it looks toward expansion and sustainability, the college is exploring a partnership with the state’s Department of Jobs and Family Services to use social services (specifically, TANF and WIOA) funding to pay some program costs for eligible students. Some supports, such as the monthly gift cards to help with gas and groceries, come from the college’s private foundation. ✓ MDRC’s evaluation identified a direct cost per participant of \$1,800, which is a significant decrease from the original \$4,800 in direct program costs found for ASAP.
How and Why this Strategy is Working	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● SAIL and other ASAP-based programs show that the <i>combination</i> of interventions leads to such large positive outcomes. While other interventions offer financial aid/scholarships <i>or</i> comprehensive student supports, SAIL combines both with acceleration from full-time enrollment.



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The fact that SAIL attracted non-traditional students to enroll full-time in its program runs counter to many expectations. It's often assumed older students want to attend college part-time but that is not always the case, and it's worth keeping in mind when developing completion strategies for non-traditional students. • Lorain worked hard to integrate the program into its general operations instead of operating it in isolation. For example, SAIL advisors participate in department meetings and training sessions for the general advising staff, which helps the program remain integrated with the rest of the college. Doing so facilitates information flow and continuous improvement across the whole institution.
Lessons Learned	SAIL takes a triage approach to its advising, offering students with greater needs more intensive services. This approach differs from the original ASAP model in New York City that had a "one size fits all" approach and caseloads for advisors between 60 and 80 students. The SAIL model helped significantly reduce the program's overall cost per student, yet program positive impacts remain high.
More information	Lorain Community College SAIL website MDRC evaluation of SAIL/ASAP Case Study about SAIL Implementation
Contact	Melissa Vernon White, mvernonwhite@lorainccc.edu



Practice	San Diego Workforce Partnership's Income Share Agreement Fund
Location	San Diego, CA (urban)
Focus	Innovative Financial Aid
Lead Organization	Workforce Development Board
Postsecondary Attainment Rate	48%
Population	1,400,000
Median Household income	\$79,700
Race/Ethnicity (%)	
White	65
African American	6
Latino/Hispanic (any race)	30
Asian	17
American Indian	0.5

Practice	San Diego Workforce Partnership's Income Share Agreement Fund <i>(College Affordability)</i>
Why it's Important	The ability to pay for a postsecondary credential is a barrier for some adults seeking to upskill or change careers. This statement is particularly true for short-term, workforce-oriented credential programs that do not qualify for traditional financial aid. As a result, some organizations are implementing <u>"pay-for-success" alternative financing models to help students access education</u> and avoid private student loans that can be costly to repay.
Description	San Diego Workforce Partnership, the county's workforce development board, offers an Income Share Agreement (ISA) to help adults access credential programs and career support services, including placement in high-demand technology fields. Through the program, launched in 2019, students do not pay for their credential upfront, but agree to pay a fixed percentage (between five and eight percent) of their income for a fixed period of time after they graduate. Unlike with a student loan, they only make ISA payments when they are earning more than the minimum income threshold of \$40,000. University of California San Diego's Extension program is the education partner for this program, which is currently limited to technology certificates



	in areas such as programming, business intelligence, and user experience design. Credentials take between 9 and 15 months to complete.
Context	While some universities and others have implemented ISAs, the program by the San Diego Workforce Partnership is the first sponsored by a publicly supported workforce board. To kickstart the ISA Fund, the Partnership received about \$3 million in grants and support from the Strada Education Network, Google, and the James Irvine Foundation. It also tapped local technology businesses to help design the program and provide mentorship, internship, and job placement opportunities for graduates.
Evidence of Impact and Sustainability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ The Partnership is meeting its target to serve high need students: over 90% of initial applicants were first-generation students and 30% were receiving food assistance. ✓ The first cohort graduated during the early months of COVID-19, which hindered initial employment opportunities. However, those who did obtain jobs earned an average salary of \$53,000 a year. ✓ The Partnership’s goal is to raise additional capital for the ISA fund over the next five years to expand to other education partners and additional technology occupations like drone aviation and cybersecurity, as well as other sectors such as health care, advanced manufacturing, life sciences, clean energy and construction, and public sector occupations like teachers.
How and Why this Strategy is Working	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● A driving force behind a pay-for-success model like an Income Share Agreement is shared risk between the student and the financing entity. Students only pay when they are earning an income that meets the threshold; if their income is below that level the payments pause. Unlike student loans, after a five to seven year (depending on the certificate program) “payment window,” students stop making payments regardless of whether they reached the “payment cap” in their ISA contract. This model differs significantly compared to student loans that can burden students for decades. ● The Partnership’s ISA Fund benefits because when students do land high paying jobs, the student’s payments can reach a maximum cap of 1.8 times the cost of what it paid for the student to complete the program. For example, if the program cost \$6,100, the payment cap is \$11,700. The goal of this ISA model is not to make a profit—instead, the Fund recycles the payments back into the program to support other students, in essence, “paying it forward.”

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Partnership is committed to transparency and consumer rights. It works to ensure students are familiar with other financing and educational options available to them and develops comparison tools for students, so they understand the consequences that stem from decisions about how to pay for their education.
Lessons Learned	Leaders at the Partnership cite the importance of paying attention to equity with ISAs, making sure that screening processes and eligibility criteria do not exclude students locked out of wealth building opportunities. This recommendation is important because some ISAs receive criticism for being less likely to serve students who might be deemed a riskier investment.
More information	San Diego Partnership's Income Share Agreement Fund website Sample ISA contract ISA Statement of Principles from San Diego Workforce Partnership Resources for outcomes-focused ISAs
Contact	Alistair Penny, penny_a@workforce.org



Practice	Seita Scholars Program – Western Michigan University
Location	Kalamazoo, MI (small urban)
Focus	Foster Youth
Lead Organization	University
Postsecondary Attainment Rate	56%
Population	76,200
Median Household income	\$41,800
Race/Ethnicity (%)	
	White 68
	African American 22
	Latino/Hispanic (any race) 8
	Asian 2
	American Indian 0.2

Practice	Seita Scholars Program -- Western Michigan University <i>(Special Populations)</i>
Why it's Important	There were 17,000 foster youth in North Carolina in 2019, which was 15% more than in 2010. About a quarter of the 17,000 were 14 years or older. Transitioning out of foster care in adulthood is not easy and education and employment outcomes for former foster youth significantly lag compared to their peers. While North Carolina has financial aid available to support foster youth in college (NCreach.org), including covering some living expenses, earning a college credential is still the exception, rather than norm, for most former foster youth in the state.
Description	Western Michigan University in Kalamazoo, Michigan established its Seita Scholars Program in 2008 to improve educational outcomes for young adults who aged out of the state's foster care system. Scholars in the program: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Receive a scholarship, ● Year-round on-campus housing, ● Peer mentors who are older students in the program, ● First-year seminars specifically for Seita Scholars, ● Access to community support volunteers & career mentors, and ● One-on-one holistic coaching for academic and personal support.
Context	Kalamazoo is a small city in the western part of Michigan. Applicants to the Seita Scholars program must be from Michigan and be between the ages of



	<p>17 and 25. They must apply for the state’s tuition assistance program for foster youth, for other state financial aid programs for low-income students, and complete the FAFSA. Combined, the scholarships and financial aid cover almost the total cost of attendance for Scholars.</p>
<p>Evidence of Impact and Sustainability</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Seita Scholars graduate at a rate of 42 percent, more than eight times the graduation rate for foster youth nationally. ✓ WMU is home to about 150 Seita Scholars, thought to be the largest number of former foster youth in a single university in the nation. ✓ The university expanded its efforts in 2012 by creating the Center for Fostering Success. The center conducts research on foster care and higher education and trains campus coaches for foster youth in nine states. The center also runs a statewide network—Fostering Success Michigan—to spread best practices and support other colleges and universities as they serve former foster care youth. ✓ Phi Kappa Phi awarded the program its 2018 national Excellence in Innovation award.
<p>How and Why this Strategy is Working</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● One core component of the Seita Scholars program is ensuring that students are partners in making program decisions. Putting student voices front and center is key because it’s the students themselves who have a shared understanding of the challenges many experience and are in a good position to offer meaningful insights on what students need. ● Seita established a fund for emergency resources because former foster youth typically don’t have others they can lean on for unexpected costs. ● Coaches who work with the Scholars are highly skilled and trained because working to heal the effects of child abuse or trauma requires advanced skills and professional development. ● The program intentionally connects to other services on campus and in the community because it makes more sense, and is more cost effective, than attempting to provide all the services students need by itself.
<p>Lessons Learned</p>	<p>According to program leaders, part of the program’s success is the fact that it extends beyond direct program staff at the university. The staff has developed a network of campus and community partners to engage with the program. For example, not long before COVID-19, the university’s Office of Student Engagement hosted a backpacking trip for Seita Scholars that focused on leadership and team-building skills. The university hosts other</p>

	events for the Scholars and puts together care packages for students during breaks.
More information	WMU's Seita Scholars website Short case study of Seita Scholars
Contact	Ronicka Hamilton, ronicka.hamilton@wmich.edu



Practice	Supporting College Students' Economic Security and Basic Needs <i>(Community Partnerships & Foundational Supports)</i>
Why it's Important	College students are not the first image that comes to mind when most people think about individuals living on the edge, figuring out how to pay their rent, buy food, and cover other basic needs. However, research over the past several years puts in plain sight the fact that many of <u>today's college students face economic insecurities that impede their ability to persist and complete a postsecondary credential</u> . Pew Research in 2019, for example, found that almost 25% of community college students live in poverty, and fewer than 1 in 5 college students fit the traditional profile of a student whose parents can pay all their college expenses.
Description	<p>Education and community partners in many places partner to connect students with resources that will help them be successful college students. The types of support that students may need include food, housing, childcare, and transportation assistance. Here are two approaches to help students so they can focus more on being successful students and less on basic needs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● <u>Emergency aid, food pantries, and meal swipe programs</u>: Supporting the immediate needs of college students through emergency aid funds (to help pay a car repair bill or cover a month's rent, for example) or through on campus efforts to address food insecurity are two common ways to help. For example, <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ It is not uncommon for a college to operate a food pantry to improve students' access to food. The food bank at Michigan State University is considered a national model. It operates 12 months a year and in one year served over 6,000 students. ○ Swipe Out Hunger is a national network of more than 130 colleges across the country that work with campus dining facilities to ensure students who are hungry have access to meals. Students can donate their extra meal swipes to those that need them, and in some cases Swipe Out Hunger chapters, run by students, work with dining services to include more meals for students in need as part of their dining contracts. ○ Many colleges have emergency aid funds supported by local donors to help students with unexpected financial needs and to keep them on track toward a degree. Eligibility and types of support vary widely. Georgia State University's Panther



	<p>Retention Grants are a well-established example of using emergency aid grants to help more students finish their degree. Similarly, NC Finish Line grants offer assistance to community college students who need emergency assistance to finish their degree.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Connecting students to income support and community resources: Beyond meeting immediate needs, some colleges are taking a more systemic approach to help improve students’ financial stability so they can focus more on being a student. Several approaches are available: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ United Way’s SparkPoint centers often partner with community colleges to work with students (and community members) to connect them to benefits and resources to help them succeed in college and to offer financial coaching. The SparkPoint center at Skyline College in California is a national model for combining community and postsecondary resources to support students. ○ Single Stop is another benefits screening and community resource tool that is available for college students. Single Stop is already in operation at two universities and eight community colleges in NC where a coordinator works directly with students to guide and support students. ○ Findhelp.org (formerly Aunt Bertha) is a public benefits corporation that curates local resources ranging from housing assistance and mental health care, to transit services. The online tool is free to anyone and can be helpful to college advisors and success coaches working with students.
Context	<p>When considering college affordability and students’ economic security, it is useful to think about more than tuition and fees. Instead, a more accurate term is “total cost of attendance,” which accounts for tuition, fees, books, food, transportation, housing, and personal expenses. With this in mind, determining “unmet need” is a useful financial aid framework when assessing whether a student can afford college. This term represents the gap between total cost of attendance and what a student can pay through their own resources and traditional financial aid, meaning it reflects the fact that not all students are in the same financial situation.</p>
Evidence of Impact and Sustainability	<p>✓ Research on Georgia State University’s Panther Retention Grants that provide emergency aid to students found that 61% of the seniors who received Panther Retention Grant support graduated within two</p>



	<p>semesters of receiving the grant and 82% either graduated or were still enrolled one year after receiving the grant.</p> <p>✓ A 2020 RAND study of Single Stop found positive effects on students receiving services through the program, both in terms of credits attempted and persistence. The impact was greatest among adult learners, independent students, and students of color.</p>
How and Why this Strategy is Working	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emergency aid grants are important because data analytics find that thousands of students stop out close to graduation because they have used all their financial aid and exhausted their financial resources. Completion grants provide financial support to finish their degree. • Taking a comprehensive approach to connect students to benefits and resources, particularly federal benefits, improves students’ financial health. Students may be unaware they qualify, may struggle to navigate public systems, or may avoid benefits because of stigma. In some cases, college students are not eligible for benefits based on federal or state requirements and definitions. Some states— Washington, Oregon, Kentucky, and Arkansas, for example— changed state policies to help more low-income college students qualify for food and income support while pursuing their degree.
Lessons Learned	<p>Partnerships between colleges, state and local agencies, and community organizations are central to efforts to connect college students to resources they need to help them persist and complete their degree. A key is to build systems-level approaches where coordination goes deeper than merely cooperative arrangements based on relationships that may shift when personnel changes occur.</p>
More information	<p>Guidebook for Addressing Students' Basic Needs</p> <p>Early Findings from ECMC's Basic Needs Initiative</p>
Contact	<p>See program links above</p>



Practice	Way Back Warriors – Wayne State University
Location	Detroit, MI (urban)
Focus	Student Debt Forgiveness
Lead Organization	University
Postsecondary Attainment Rate	34%
Population	670,000
Median Household income	\$31,000
Race/Ethnicity (%)	
	White 15
	African American 78
	Latino/Hispanic (any race) 8
	Asian 2
	American Indian 0.4

Practice	Way Back Warriors – Wayne State University <i>(College Affordability)</i>
Why it's Important	Some students near graduation don't complete their degree because of financial barriers, including relatively small balances on their accounts that prevent them from registering for classes. Warrior Way Back gives students who left before completing their degree <u>a path to reconnect to college and to qualify for debt-forgiveness.</u>
Description	<p>Started in 2017, Warrior Way Back is a debt forgiveness program for returning students with an outstanding balance at the university. Students who apply can receive up to \$1,500 (\$500 per semester, for up to three semesters) of debt-forgiveness after they graduate. Students who qualify stopped out of the university for two or more years and have a balance due to the university that does not exceed \$1,500.</p> <p>Leaders at the university developed the program because they noticed many former students had a past-due balance. They conducted an analysis and determined that forgiving balances would benefit both students and the university. The university re-acquires debt from collection agencies and writes it off, after which it determines how much students owe, waiving fees and interest. Students accepted into the program must register for at least six credits for three out of four consecutive terms and enroll in the courses they need to complete their degree.</p>



Context	Located in Detroit, MI, Wayne State University is a public four-year research university with about 15,000 undergraduate students and 8,000 graduate students. Almost 20% of the university’s undergraduate students are 25 years old or older.
Evidence of Impact and Sustainability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ The university reports a significant return on investment so far. It forgave \$39,000 in past-due debts for 2018-2019 fall and winter terms and netted \$373,000 in tuition and fees paid by students. ✓ Based on the success of the effort at Wayne State, the university recently partnered with two other universities in the region—Henry Ford College and Oakland University—to create a larger regional debt-forgiveness program. Returning students can finish their degree at any partner college and receive the same benefits. This collaboration stems from Detroit Drives Degrees, a regional effort to support adult students.
How and Why this Strategy is Working	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The university recruits by reaching out to former students through traditional and social media, open houses, and community groups, including churches. ● The university has a dedicated advisor for Warrior Way Back students to help them map their path toward finishing their degree and to connect them to campus resources they may need. ● Wayne State University hosts a series of virtual webinars for Warrior Way Back students to reacquaint them with the university and ensure students are familiar with the myriad supports for adult students on campus. Since some students have been away for many years, part of the goal is to help them understand what being an adult learner on the campus is like today. ● The program created affinity groups (e.g., a group for women and a group for men) for adult students so they can connect with other older students on campus. The intent to help students feel connected to the university and to enable peer support.
Lessons Learned	Wayne State recognizes that students who left the university prior to graduating may have lost some of their trust in the institution. A key goal has been to rebuild connections within the community, and current students in the program are serving as ambassadors to other former students.
More information	Warrior Way Back website



	Uspire publication that profiles Warrior Way Back
Contact	Dawn Medley, dawn.medley@wayne.edu

