Research Report

ETS

THE COLLEGE PROMISE SERIES

Expanding Promise:

Depicting the Ecosystems of Support and Financial Sustainability for Five College Promise Populations

Catherine Millett, Editor

A joint initiative of College Promise and ETS

ETS POLICY EVALUATION & RESEARCH CENTER

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RESEARCH REPORT

Expanding Promise: Depicting the Ecosystems of Support and Financial Sustainability for Five College Promise Populations

Catherine M. Millett

ETS, Princeton, NJ

The time is now to examine the nation's capacity to help guide students in gaining access to, paying for, and graduating from college. College promise programs have served as an excellent model. But because a uniform, national college promise model would not adequately serve the estimated 20 million students in postsecondary education, ETS and College Promise launched an effort to expand the work on college promise programs to identify ecosystems of support for specific student populations. In 2021, we invited scholars, practitioners, and student representatives to join a design team and cocreate the college promise program for their student populations: first-generation students, youth in or aged out of foster care, students with disabilities, student parents, and students needing academic support. In multiple panel discussions, other colleagues reviewed the ecosystem designs, focusing on college promise programs in general, the design of the ecosystems of support, or the financing of the ecosystems. Several key themes emerged from the meeting: (a) Although the design teams focused on one aspect of a student's life, they stressed the importance of focusing on the intersectionality of their identities; (b) terminology and definitions are important not only for policy and practice reasons but for the messages they send to students about inclusion; (c) financing a college education is more than paying tuition and fees; (d) enhanced data collection will support research, policy, and practice; and (e) developing a college promise program requires a focus on both students and postsecondary institutions.

Keywords Access to education; college programs; college promise; college students; community colleges; financial aid; financial support; first-generation college students; foster care; higher education; introductory courses; parents; paying for college; remedial education; students with disabilities; tuition

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Preface

Catherine M. Millett[1] and Martha J. Kanter[2]
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In 2016, ETS and College Promise forged a partnership focused on college promise (often called "free community college" or "free college"), the goal of which was to help every student get to and through a postsecondary education, equipped for the next step in their academic or workplace journeys. For us, "free" equals "paid for." We recognize that paying for tuition and fees does not cover the full cost of college, nor is it enough to cover the student supports that enable successful transitions from school or work to and through college and a career.

College promise programs are a policy vehicle to help overcome the financial barrier to education. They do this by covering, at a minimum, the cost of tuition and fees, making a college degree more affordable and accessible for students who are determined to succeed. A promise program can be scaled for a single institution, a community, an entire state, and perhaps even a nation. Each program can tailor its features and funding strategies to the needs and available resources of its chosen area.

ETS and College Promise started our work with a goal of examining how to design sustainable funding models for college promise initiatives. We invited scholars, practitioners, and policy makers to join one of five design teams to cocreate the models. The teams produced five models, each focused on a specific approach for expanding access and financing: children's savings accounts, state-funded programs, privately funded programs, redesign of federal financial aid, and outcomes-based financing. At a capstone symposium in 2016, design teams were joined by members of the higher education community, scholars, policy makers, and other stakeholders to review and comment on the models, resulting in the report, *Designing Sustainable Funding for College Promise Initiatives* (Millett, 2017).

To serve the estimated 20 million students in the United States in postsecondary education (National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 2017), ETS and College Promise recognize that given the need for programs to address the diversity and particular needs of specific populations, a single universal college promise model would not be adequate. Individual students and student subpopulations vary significantly in their needs for and the benefits accrued from assistance with academic support, health care, employment, transportation, food, childcare, elder care housing, and other financial support as they navigate the process of getting to and through college and beyond.

Two years later, in 2018, we launched an initiative called "Depicting the Ecosystems of Support and Financial Sustainability for College Promise Populations." Two cohorts have been focused on student populations since then: the 2019 and the 2021. To develop promise programs appropriate for these two cohorts, we adopted the symposium and design team process that we had used earlier. Once again, we invited scholars, practitioners, and student representatives to join a design team and cocreate the college promise program for specific student populations. And once again, we aimed to capture the synergy of what can be learned when the higher education community unites with an array of stakeholders in education, public policy, the workforce, social services, health services, and finance to (a) develop a comprehensive ecosystem of support for targeted subpopulations and (b) identify the cross-group connections for use in and adaptation to the needs of local communities, states, and the nation.

The 2019 cohort design teams produced models for tailored college promise programs for five populations: traditional aged, adult, undocumented, veteran, and incarcerated/formerly incarcerated students. The teams presented their sustainable-funding designs to one another and to a group of thought leaders, including scholars, policy makers, finance experts, and other educational stakeholders, at a workshop in June 2019. These designs, as well as coverage of the financing portion of the workshop, are available in a research report, *Depicting the Ecosystem of Support and Financial Sustainability for Five College Promise Populations* (Millett, 2020).

For the 2021 cohort, the design teams focused on a different set of student populations: first-generation students, students in or aged out of foster care, students with disabilities, student parents, and students needing academic support. In light of COVID-19, the 2021 design teams worked and convened remotely. Virtual workshops were held on June 2, 3, and 9, 2021 (see Appendix A for the agenda and Appendix B for design team members). Two days were open to the public, and 1 day was set aside for a private workshop. This volume is a compilation of the five new ecosystem designs and the collective insights developed over the 3-day workshop.

College Promise and ETS thank the many people who contributed to the virtual symposium and to this volume. The design team members did exceptional work, and the contributions of the stakeholders who participated on the panels were invaluable. They provided context for the discussions and added to our collective thinking about not only the five focal populations but also how to foster success for all students. We extend a special thank-you to Maria Evans, who captured our discussions in her sketch notes. Thank you to the other stakeholders and participants who joined us over the 3 days.

This volume essentially follows the program agenda in Appendix A. Chapter 1 provides background information on college promise. Chapter 2 provides a summary data profile of the five populations. Chapter 3 presents the discussion points from the student panel, the 10-minute SPARK[1] Talks where each design team presented the big ideas that are fully developed in their chapter as well as panels with postsecondary education leaders, foundation leaders, and government leaders. In Chapters 4–8, each of the design teams presents its visions for college promise programs for its specific student population, albeit many of the teams highlighted connections to other student populations. In Chapter 9, colleagues who took on the role of knowledge navigators offer their reflections and insights on the college promise program designs and funding considerations. In Chapter 10, we build out the financing needs for college promise programs, building on the foundation from the 2019 teams. In Chapter 11, we consider the key points raised by the 2019 design teams that resonated with the 2021 design teams, along with new points the 2021 teams brought to our attention as well as the opportunities that lie ahead for ETS and College Promise (Appendix S1, Supporting Information).

1. Situating College Promise in Today's Higher Education Context

Catherine M. Millett, Stephanie R. Saunders, and Lisa Y. Ankrah
ETS, Princeton, NJ

The college promise movement signals to students, families, communities, states, and the nation that postsecondary education is for everyone and that it can be affordable. In that, college promise represents a transformative commitment to higher education (Glatter, 2020). Since the launch of the first college promise program in Kalamazoo, Michigan, in 2005, the college promise movement has experienced tremendous growth, accelerating significantly since 2015. Across the nation, college and university trustees and administrators, elected officials, and leaders from business, education, philanthropy, labor, nonprofit organizations, and local communities are building strategic partnerships to keep higher education and the pursuit of the American Dream within reach for today's students. They are forming initiatives to meet the promise of postsecondary education with programs that cover tuition and fees, often also providing support services to enable students to complete their degree programs and successfully transition to the workplace (Kanter & Armstrong, 2019). The college promise movement's rapid expansion in recent years was spurred by local and statewide research, government policy, and practical applications of scholarships and student supports in more than 349 communities and 47 states, all of which increased student access and success through postsecondary education (College Promise, 2021).

There is no single way to build a college promise (College Promise Campaign, 2018) and no one program implementation model that can serve all students (Millett, 2020). Today, communities, states, and even the federal government are working to determine which program features and funding work best to drive economic, social, and civic prosperity by helping to make a postsecondary education available and affordable to any student who wants it. The leaders of these initiatives are leveraging the college promise movement because they recognize that having an educated, workforce-ready citizenry is essential for the economic, civic, and social health of our communities and our country; they also recognize that education is a pathway to a healthier future for individuals, families, local economies, and the greater society (Kanter & Armstrong, 2019). Citizens with college degrees, with technical certificates, or who completed apprenticeships are necessary to meet the shifting demands of the 21st-century economy and workforce. Strategic partnerships and coalitions are forming, too, in recognition of the urgent need to address the rising costs of college, which have made postsecondary education seem out of reach for many of those who need it most: first-generation and low-income students, working parents, and older adults looking to retrain, upskill, or advance in a constantly evolving workplace increasingly focused on skills and knowledge (Kanter & Armstrong, 2019).

No Standard Profile of Today's College Students and the Supports They Need

The demographic profiles of today's college students and the costs of attending college have both changed significantly in recent decades, as has our understanding of how to support student access and success. In this overview, we highlight data and facts on college students, student support options, and college financing, which were presented in more detail in *Depicting the Ecosystems of Support and Financial Sustainability for Five College Promise Populations* (Millett, 2020; see Figure 1.1).

College Students Today

Today's U.S. college students are more diverse than in the past and, partly as a result, have a broader range of needs than students of previous generations (Association of American Colleges and Universities, 2018). Although most high school students attend college right after graduation (prepandemic), as many as 33% do not (McFarland et al., 2019). Most high school students who attend college enter academically unprepared and need to take at least one developmental education course (Ganga et al., 2018). Of the approximately 20 million college students expected to enroll in college in 2019, 6 million will attend 2-year institutions, and 7.8 million will attend classes part-time (NCES, 2019a, 2019b). Most new jobs will require individuals to have a postsecondary credential (Carnevale et al., 2016).

Student Supports

Many college students, especially those attending 2-year institutions, experience food or housing insecurity (Goldrick-Rab, Baker-Smith, Coca, & Looker, 2019). They also need additional supports to become academically prepared for college

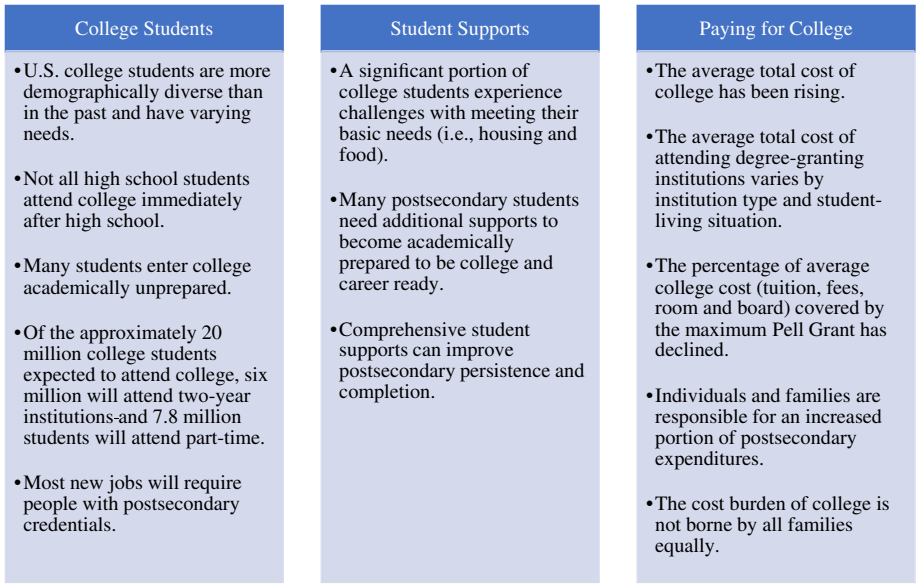

Figure 1.1 College facts summary (Millett et al. [2020], Chapter 2, pp. 9–12).

and career opportunities, which costs students time, financial aid, and motivation (Bailey, 2009a; Jimenez et al., 2016; U.S. Department of Education, 2019b). Providing comprehensive student supports—academic, nonacademic, career, personal, and financial—can improve postsecondary persistence and completion (McDonnell et al., 2014).

Paying for College

The average cost of college has been rising faster than the rate of inflation since academic year 1974–1975 (Cahalan et al., 2019). The average total cost varies by institution type and each student's living situation, but on average, room and board has risen 82% from 1974–1975 to 2017–2018 (McFarland et al., 2019; Sreenivasan & Wise, 2019). Meanwhile, the maximum Pell Grant's cost coverage has declined to 25% (Cahalan et al., 2019). As a result, individuals and families have become responsible for an increasing share of college costs. Nor do all families pay the same share of college costs; for families in the lowest income quartile, the costs of college equal 94% of their income, versus 14% among families in the highest income quartile (Cahalan et al., 2019).

The Year 2020: The Pandemic's Impact on Postsecondary Education

The global pandemic has had far-ranging and potentially devastating effects on higher education institutions and for students' opportunities to access higher education; this has in turn affected society. For institutions, these effects include declines in enrollment and unpredictable enrollment behavior; for students, they include questions about the financial value of in-person versus online learning.

According to the National Student Clearinghouse Research Center (NSC, 2021), in spring 2021, postsecondary enrollment experienced its steepest decline since the pandemic began, dropping by 3.5%, or approximately 603,000 students. This decline is 7 times larger than the rate of decline reported in spring 2020, which marked the beginning of the global pandemic and the abrupt transition to online learning. While declines in undergraduate enrollment are evident across institutional sectors, as of spring 2021, community colleges remained the hardest hit (−9.5%, or 476,000 fewer students; NSC, 2021). This finding is extraordinary given that economic downturns typically result in community college enrollment growth as people return to school for new skills, as was the case during the Great Recession of 2008. In researching the trend, New America noted, "This significant decline in enrollment is particularly worrying for educational equity. After all, community colleges are often access points for low-income students, students of color, and adult students" (Fishman & Nguyen, 2021, para. 3). Another point of concern is the enrollment drop among first-time college students, who as a group saw the deepest dip, dropping 16.1% nationally and 22.7% among community colleges, accounting for 69% of the total drop in fall 2020 college enrollment (Sedmak, 2020).

In all, data suggest a hesitancy among prospective students to enter educational systems during a time of upheaval and in which learning is conducted mostly online (Goldstein & Parlapiano, 2021). According to Gallagher and Palmer (2020), fall 2020 marked a clear inflection point as students, educators, and government leaders scrutinized the value proposition of higher education through the lens of traditional classrooms versus multiple modes of digital delivery. After a decade of growth in postsecondary alternatives, including massively open online courses, industry-driven certification programs, and coding boot camps, the pandemic will likely be remembered as a "critical turning point between the 'time before,' when analog on-campus degree-focused learning was the default, to the 'time after,' when digital, online, career-focused learning became the fulcrum of competition between institutions" (Gallagher & Palmer, 2020, para. 3). Unfortunately, as with the relative costs of college, the challenges of remote learning are not distributed equally. Research suggests that students' abilities to succeed in remote-learning environments may differ greatly by income level, with only 40% of students from lower income households reporting access to the equipment necessary for remote learning, compared to 72% of students from high-income households (Kim et al., 2020).

Survey findings by New America included high rates of unemployment among community college students during the pandemic. Among those who held on to their jobs, a majority were deemed essential workers, which put them at a greater risk of contracting and spreading the COVID-19 virus (Fishman & Nguyen, 2021). Significant percentages of community college students also have experienced one or more economic hardships during the pandemic, including falling behind on a bill, and as a result had to apply for public benefits or receiving food from a pantry or other program or from a friend or family member during the pandemic (Fishman & Nguyen, 2021).

The pandemic and its consequences, as well as the inequities that it both revealed and exacerbated, have made college promise programs more essential than ever. Tuition aid and wraparound services[2] can help ease financial, food-security, child- and elder care, housing, mental health, and other issues that students have faced since the outbreak of the pandemic while helping them develop the academic and life skills needed to succeed in college and beyond. This, in turn, may also reduce prospective students' hesitancy to pursue higher education and, thereby, increase the number and proportion of individuals who enter the workforce equipped with postsecondary credentials, in turn easing the economic blow of the COVID-19 pandemic.

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2. A Data Profile of the Five Student Populations

Stephanie R. Saunders, Lisa Y. Ankrah, and Catherine M. Millett
ETS, Princeton, NJ

In reflecting on what we learned from our experience producing the 2019 report, we decided to augment the data profile section to include not only basic facts about the five populations but also a richer general introduction to the five student populations. Our intent is to provide a context to show why supporting each of these unique populations is important and to highlight the similarities and contrasts among the five populations.

First-Generation College Students: Definition

The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) has defined first-generation college students as "students who enrolled in postsecondary education and whose parents do not have any postsecondary education experience" (Redford & Hoyer, 2017, p. 3). However, other researchers and policy makers have varying ideas of who a first-generation college student is. Whereas some may include students who have only one college-educated parent, others create their definitions based on their idea of what "went to college" means, the type of institution a student's parents attended, or who is considered a parent (Toutkoushian et al., 2018). The following findings were made:

- Thirty-five percent of U.S. undergraduates were the first in their families to go to college in the 2015–2016 academic year (Postsecondary National Policy Institute [PNPI], 2021).
- First-generation students are less likely than others to enroll in college within 3 months of finishing high school; less likely to attend highly or moderately selective 4-year institutions; and more likely to attend public 2-year or for-profit institutions (Cataldi et al., 2018; Redford & Hoyer, 2017).
- First-generation college students are older and disproportionally Black or Hispanic, student parents and/or women, and come from families with lower incomes than their counterparts (Engle, 2007).
- First-generation college students have lower rates of bachelor's degree completion than non-first-generation college students due to such causes as financial need, a preference to work and earn money over attending school, and/or a change in family status (Redford & Hoyer, 2017).
- First-generation college students must contend with many obstacles, including the consequences of insufficient academic preparation by their K–12 schools, difficulties accessing campus services, and juggling courses with work and family responsibilities (Havlik et al., 2020; Katrevich & Aruguete, 2017; McCoy, 2014).
- Researchers have found that providing mentors and obtaining and retaining faculty, administrators, and other staff from the same backgrounds, as well as creating safe spaces, such as multicultural student centers, can increase the integration, retention, and success of first-generation students in the postsecondary school educational environment (McCoy, 2014; Soria & Stebleton, 2012).
- First-generation college students borrowed more often and in greater amounts than non-first-generation college students (Furquim et al., 2017).

Students in or Aged Out of Foster Care: Definition

Foster youth are youth who have been temporarily placed away from their parents by a child welfare agency due to safety issues, abuse, neglect, or parents' inability to care for them, with the aim of either reuniting the child with their family or placing them with an adoptive family (Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2020a). Low-income children and children of color are overrepresented in this population (Dworsky, 2018). The Annie E. Casey Foundation (2018) found that in almost half of the states, Black youth aged 14–21 years were more than 3 times as likely to be in foster care than their White peers.

- Between 32% and 45% of foster youth who graduate from high school enroll in college. Approximately 3%–11% earn a bachelor's degree (National Working Group on Foster Care and Education [NWGFCE], 2018).[3]
- College students who have been in foster care at some point in their lives are more likely to experience food and housing insecurity than college students who have not, regardless of the type of higher education institution they attended (Goldrick-Rab, Richardson, Schneider, et al., 2018).

- COVID-19 has exacerbated the situation, with emancipated foster students reporting that the virus causes them food insecurity (55%), housing insecurity (7%), or loss of educational supports (31%); 21% reported that they lacked the personal support needed to prevent the virus/these conditions from interfering with their education plans (Greeson et al., 2020).
- Researchers have demonstrated that former foster youth who are pursuing higher education benefit from financial aid, housing support, support from mentors and adults, job preparation aid, income support, college preparation services, and mental health support (Barnow et al., 2015; NWGFCE, 2018).
- Extended time in foster care has been found to reduce the likelihood of a foster youth becoming pregnant or conceiving a child, reduce the amount of public assistance students receive, and reduce the likelihood of homelessness (Courtney et al., 2018).
- Providing year-round housing support, monetary support for transportation, emergency funding, and expansion of wraparound services to include former foster youth can improve outcomes for this population (Jackson et al., 2021).

Although few large-scale studies have been done, many smaller studies have indicated that the path to higher education is difficult for foster youth. Efforts of former foster youth to prepare for postsecondary education can be undermined by frequent school changes, mental health issues, and greater risk of teen pregnancy (Dworsky, 2018). Frequent school changes can disrupt the academic development and ability of foster youth to build and sustain friends and other peer relationships (Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2018; Bauer & Thomas, 2019). These effects are evident as early as elementary school (Osher et al., 2003). Stress and adverse childhood experiences may make foster youth vulnerable to developing mental illnesses; in his review of studies of the mental health of foster youth, Pecora, et al. (2009) reported that 63% of foster youth in the Casey Field Office Mental Health Study had at least one diagnosis in their lives of a mental health disturbance, impairment, or illness. Teen pregnancy is more common among those in and aged out of foster care. In their analysis of data of youth aged 17–19 years, Dworsky and Courtney (2010) found that young women aging out of foster care were more likely to have been pregnant at least once by age 17 or 18 years (33%) than nonfoster young women (14%).

Foster youth are declared emancipated when they have aged out of foster care at age 18 years. In fiscal year 2018, 7%, or 17,844 foster youth, were emancipated (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services [DHHS], Administration for Children and Families [ACF], & Children's Bureau, 2019).[4] However, emancipated foster youth are usually not prepared for the challenges of living on their own, nor do they have the resources for postsecondary education. In a qualitative study conducted by Dworsky and Perez (2010), administrators and directors of on-campus programs that target emancipated foster students reported worrying that foster youth lacked access to information about postsecondary education, admission requirements, financial aid, or campus support programs. Many of the program administrators and directors guessed that 50%–100% of their program participants needed to take developmental education classes. In another study, fewer than 25% of foster youth who were provided a federally funded transition service were given a job, housing, or educational services (Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2018). Thus it is not surprising that the National Youth in Transition Database (NYTD) survey found that only 54% of foster youth surveyed were enrolled and attending an educational program by age 19 years and that only 24% were enrolled and attending such a program at age 21 years (DHHS, ACF, & Children's Bureau, 2019). The Annie E. Casey Foundation (2020b) found that among the 7,777 youths who transitioned out of foster care, fewer than 0.5% (10 individuals) earned a bachelor's degree and 26 individuals earned a higher degree by age 21 years.

Although state and federal programs aid this population's postsecondary pursuits, some limit the number of emancipated foster youth who can receive their aid, are themselves vulnerable to limited funding, or have restrictive eligibility requirements. For example, 28 states provide direct tuition assistance to foster youth; however, these programs are usually last-dollar programs[5] and may not cover significant nontuition expenses, such as transportation and housing. Moreover, eligibility requirements vary by state, and many limit the number of waivers they make available. The Education and Training Voucher Program gives states the money to provide foster youth with educational and training vouchers, and states can allow such vouchers to be used for nontuition expenses; however, the amount of money provided depends on the availability of funds, and they act as last-dollar programs. In addition, foster youth often take longer to obtain a degree, making the 12-semester limit of Pell Grants restrictive (Dworsky, 2018).

Emancipated foster youth who do manage to enroll in higher education experience a greater academic struggle than their non-foster youth counterparts (NWGFCE, 2018). Emancipated foster youth usually do not have a support system on which to rely. Thus, they juggle work and school and may face financial and housing trouble (NWGFCE, 2018).

Unrau et al. (2012) found that while former foster youth were more academically motivated and more likely to use personal counseling and academic assistance than their non-foster youth counterparts, they completed fewer credit hours (10 vs. 13), had lower grade point averages (GPAs) at the end of the first semester (2.34 vs. 2.85), and were more likely to withdraw from at least one course (47% vs. 18%). In a comparison study of foster and non-foster youth at Michigan State University, Day et al. (2011) found that more foster youth dropped out before finishing their freshman year than non-foster youth (21% vs. 13%), especially White and female foster youth students. After the first year, more foster youth students dropped out than non-foster youth students (34% vs. 18%); again, White foster students were more likely to drop out than their non-foster counterparts.

Students With Disabilities: Definition

The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 defines disability as a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities, a record of such an impairment, or being regarded as having such an impairment.

- In academic year 2015–2016, 3,755 (or 19.5% of) college students reported having a disability. Among those students, 40% reported having a mental illness or depression, 26.4% reported having attention-deficit disorder, 5.9% reported orthopedic disability, 4.2% reported visual disability, 3.9% reported hearing disability, 3.5% reported a specific learning disability, 1.3% reported speech disability, and 14.7% reported disabilities other than these categories (Campbell & Wescott, 2019).
- However, many students choose not to disclose their disability to disability services or professors once they enter higher education to avoid being stigmatized or for other reasons (Squires et al., 2018).
- Students with disabilities make up a significant part of the student population at all types of higher education institutions, from 18% of 4-year private and 4-year public institutions to 25% of 4-year for-profit institutions. Independent students and veterans were more likely to report a disability than dependent students and nonmilitary students, respectively (Campbell & Wescott, 2019).
- A lower percentage of undergraduate Asian students (15%) reported having a disability than White (21%), Hispanic (18%), or Black students (17%; De Brey et al., 2021).
- Researchers have suggested training institutional staff, increasing awareness of disability services for students (Abreu et al., 2016), creating peer support groups and platforms for students with disabilities, and preparing students for the discrimination they may encounter in the future (Francis et al., 2019).

Students with disabilities face several obstacles to obtaining a postsecondary degree, including inaccessibility, ableism from others, and insufficient support. For example, students with disabilities struggle to find information on disability services and resources on institutional websites (Gabel et al., 2016) and to navigate physically inaccessible campuses (Albanesi & Nusbaum, 2017). This makes it hard for them to access the services they need and to attend their classes. Students with disabilities have expressed a desire for better service delivery (Abreu et al., 2016) and communication/advocacy from disability services offices to properly receive the accommodations they need (Francis et al., 2019). In the classroom, students with disabilities must confront professors who are either ableist or do not know how to accommodate them properly (Francis et al., 2019) and peers who may not believe they are not disabled or judge them for their disabilities (Albanesi & Nusbaum, 2017).

Students with disabilities are more likely to experience food insecurity (49%–58%[6]), housing insecurity (52%–67%), and homelessness (22%–28%) than students without disabilities (40%, 51%, and 13%, respectively; Goldrick-Rab, Baker-Smith, Coca, Looker, & Williams, 2019). The COVID-19 pandemic may have exacerbated this situation. The Student Experience in the Research University (SERU) Consortium survey found that these students were more likely to have suffered financial hardships and experienced food and housing insecurity than nondisabled students during the pandemic. Students with disabilities were also less likely to report that the campus supported them during the pandemic (Soria et al., 2020a).

Student Parents: Definition

A student parent is an individual who is attending college while raising children. Student parents make up 22% of U.S. undergraduates, or 3.8 million students. They are more likely to be mothers (70%) than fathers (30%) and are more likely

to be single parents (55%) than married (45%; Institute for Women's Policy Research [IWPR] & Ascend at the Aspen Institute [Ascend], 2020). Forty-three percent of all student parents are single mothers, and Black women are more likely than women of other races to be student parents. Fifty-three percent of student parents have children aged 6 years or younger (IWPR & Ascend, 2020; Kruvelis et al., 2017; Reichlin Cruse, Holtzman, et al., 2019).

- Numerically, more student parents attend community college than any other type of college (42%); however, proportionally, for-profit colleges enroll the largest share of student parents (45%; IWPR & Ascend, 2020).
- On top of traditional needs, such as financial assistance, tutoring, and academic counseling, researchers recommend convenient and high-quality childcare services (Contreras-Mendez & Reichlin Cruse, 2021) and spaces like lactation rooms, diaper-changing stations, student parent events and organizations, family housing, and designated spaces for students with children (Generation Hope, 2020; Lindsay & Gillum, 2018). Other supports could include providing more time and greater flexibility to allow student parents to complete their coursework and stronger antidiscrimination and pro-student parent policies (Costello, 2014; Lindsay & Gillum, 2018; Reichlin Cruse et al., 2018).
- Student parents have more debt on average ($6,500) than their childless counterparts ($2,500), with single student mothers having the highest average debt ($9,500; IWPR & Ascend, 2020).
- Owing to having dependents, student parents have greater unmet postsecondary financial needs than childless students, which is estimated to be $4,400 compared to $2,200 for childless students (Reichlin Cruse et al., 2020b).
- COVID-19 has resulted in layoffs, furloughs, and reduced work hours, which has exacerbated the financial insecurity of student parents, who were already earning low wages (Reichlin Cruse et al., 2020a) and dealing with food and housing insecurity before the pandemic (Baker-Smith et al., 2020; Goldrick-Rab et al., 2020).
- Student parents are more likely than their counterparts to exit higher education without a degree (52% vs. 29%) and to cite inflexible schedules, issues with commuting, and work hours (Contreras-Mendez & Reichlin Cruse, 2021).
- Thirty-six percent of adults with some college credit but no degree are parents of children younger than age 18 years (Contreras-Mendez & Reichlin Cruse, 2021).
- Single mothers who gain an associate's degree and single mothers who gain a bachelor's degree are less likely to live in poverty (1.8 and 3 times less likely, respectively) and earn more in their lifetimes ($256,059 and $625,134 more, respectively) than single mothers with only a high school diploma (Reichlin Cruse, Milli, et al., 2019).
- Student parents who complete postsecondary education not only earn more money but also have more resources, are more involved in their children's education, and increase the chances of their children pursuing higher education (Nelson et al., 2013).

Student parents face numerous obstacles to obtaining a postsecondary degree. Because they must balance responsibilities, they have less time for rest and coursework; this is especially the case if they have younger children who have not started school (Wladis et al., 2018). Despite its benefits, childcare services at colleges have been declining. The percentage of 4-year public colleges that provide childcare fell from 54% to 48% from 2002 to 2017. For community colleges, the percentage fell from 52% to 42% during that same time (Gault, Reichlin Cruse, & Schumacher, 2019). Also, student parents of young children tend to gain fewer credits at the end of the fall and are less likely to return in the spring (Crispin & Nikolaou, 2019; Wladis et al., 2018).

Student parents face a greater risk of food (53%) and housing insecurity (68%) than childless students (37% and 42%, respectively; Baker-Smith et al., 2020; Goldrick-Rab et al., 2020). These barriers have only been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic (Reichlin Cruse et al., 2020a, 2020b). They also may contribute to student parents' lower rate of certificate/degree attainment compared to childless students[7] (37% vs. 56%, respectively; Noll et al., 2017). More often, however, student parents pause or suspend their education, with a majority (52%) exiting higher education without a degree (Nelson et al., 2013).

Students Needing Academic Support: Definition

For the purposes of this ecosystem design, college students who need academic support are defined as those who are either assessed by college placement exams as not yet ready for college-level courses or referred to developmental courses through other mechanisms, including multiple measures and self-placement, and thus are placed in developmental or supplemental coursework.

- Two-thirds of all community college students and 40% of all 4-year students are placed into at least one developmental education course (Ganga et al., 2018).
- Credits in developmental education account for nearly 10% of all credits earned at community colleges nationwide, costing an estimated $4 billion per year (Scott-Clayton & Rodriguez, 2015).
- Students who take developmental education courses are disproportionally people of color, adults, first-generation college students, and students from low-income families (Ganga et al., 2018).
- Students may feel inclined to drop out of postsecondary education due to the cost of developmental courses, which do not count toward credit requirements (Bailey & Jaggars, 2016).
- Several interventions are designed to ameliorate issues related to developmental education, including summer bridge programs, corequisite remediation, learning communities, and first-year experience programs (What Works Clearinghouse, 2019).

Many students enter college underprepared. According to both the College Board and ACT, most high school students taking college entrance exams are underprepared for higher education, as defined by the *SAT*® examination and ACT benchmarks, which set scores at or above which students have a 75% chance of earning at least a C in a college-level course for those subjects (College Board, n.d.; ACT, 2020). Thirty-one percent of SAT takers in 2020 did not meet any of the College Board's math and English/reading/writing benchmarks. Only 26% of ACT test takers met all four of the ACT's college readiness benchmarks (English, mathematics, reading, and science; ACT, 2020; College Board, 2020). Both exams highlighted significant racial disparities in benchmark achievement. Students of color who took either exam were less likely to meet all the benchmarks than White students (ACT, 2020; College Board, 2020).

Despite the intent to help prepare these students for college, developmental education courses are not always successful. For example, placement exams cannot always determine the probability that a student will do well in college-level classes, resulting in students who just miss the threshold to be placed into developmental education when academic support would suffice (Bailey & Jaggars, 2016). In addition, the "drill and practice" method of instruction in some developmental education courses does not prepare students for the actual coursework they will encounter (Bailey & Jaggars, 2016).

Higher education institutions are implementing various interventions to address this issue, all of them involving accelerating, compressing, or combining courses. These interventions include summer bridge programs (providing services right before a student enrolls in college), corequisite remediation (combining college-level courses with remedial support via recitations or labs), learning communities (connection of courses to themes and assignments and may have students live and take courses together), and first-year experience programs (courses that support developmental education students' academic performance, persistence, and degree completion; What Works Clearinghouse, 2019). Some institutions reduce the number of students who need developmental education altogether by adjusting placement score thresholds and other requirements (Park-Gaghan et al., 2020). Future developmental education reforms should involve targeting factors that cause inequity, such as stereotype threat and instructor bias, and remove policies and practices that hurt marginalized students (Brathwaite et al., 2020).

Suggested citation

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3. Voices Informing Ecosystems Design and Financial Sustainability

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While the design teams focused exclusively on designing a college promise ecosystem for their particular student populations, we wanted the symposium to amplify the collective group's thinking about how to position all students to get to, through, and beyond postsecondary education.

As with our first symposium, the incorporation of multiple perspectives was an integral part of the development of the ecosystem design teams and the Depicting the Ecosystems of Support and Financial Sustainability series. This chapter summarizes the insights shared by the college promise students, the design teams, panelists, two groups of knowledge navigators, and special guests during the symposium.

Student Insights on College Promise

As we planned the 2021 symposium, we knew that student voices must lead our work for us to understand and develop concepts of student ecosystems. To this end, each design team included a student, and we began the symposium with a student panel (see Figure 3.1). We were pleased to have Alex Shebanow, a documentary film director and producer, moderate the panel. Shebanow began the panel with his own realization that "behind every single dollar of student loan debt in this country, there's a person with friends, family, and dreams."

Martin Hernandez (Students Needing Academic Support Team)

Martin Hernandez was at the time a sophomore majoring in cybersecurity at St. Philip's College in San Antonio, Texas. He began college 20 years after graduating from high school and found himself struggling to navigate college entrance and placement exams as a nontraditional student with a family and full-time job. "Being a college student has a direct and profound impact on my child and my wife because if I'm not working, I'm in class," Hernandez noted, concerned whether he was spending enough time with his family. "It eats at your mind," he said. Upon entering college, Hernandez needed to take placement exams to determine whether he could enroll in a college-level curriculum. He missed the academic assessment cutoff score by 1 point and was required to take developmental education classes. He encouraged higher education leaders to rethink one-time assessment measures for nontraditional students, saying, "The 'way things have always been' mentality must change."

Timari Ray (First-Generation Student Team)

Timari Ray introduced herself by noting that she had recently graduated from Pellissippi State Community College in Knoxville, Tennessee, and would be attending the University of Tennessee to major in public relations. Ray confided that throughout her childhood, she did not feel like she had a voice. One high school teacher in particular encouraged her to use her voice to advocate for students like herself. She said, "I feel like that's my calling." Her message to other first-generation students is "you can go to college. There are promise programs!" Ray is the first of six siblings to attend college, an achievement she said was due in part to the support of the mentors and coaches in the Tennessee Achieves program. Mentors, she noted, inform students about scholarship opportunities. Many of her friends did not use the information and as a result, she said, were not able to complete college.

Emily Tarconish (Students With Disabilities Team)

Emily Tarconish was a PhD candidate in her last year at the University of Connecticut. Having suffered a traumatic brain injury shortly before starting college, Tarconish struggled with such challenges as recall and processing speed. She performed well in classes that required papers written outside of class, but courses that required timed tests were challenging. Despite being forthcoming about her disability, Tarconish pointed out that not one person asked whether she had heard about disability services. "I felt alone and unsupported," she said. "I wish there was community to talk about disability."

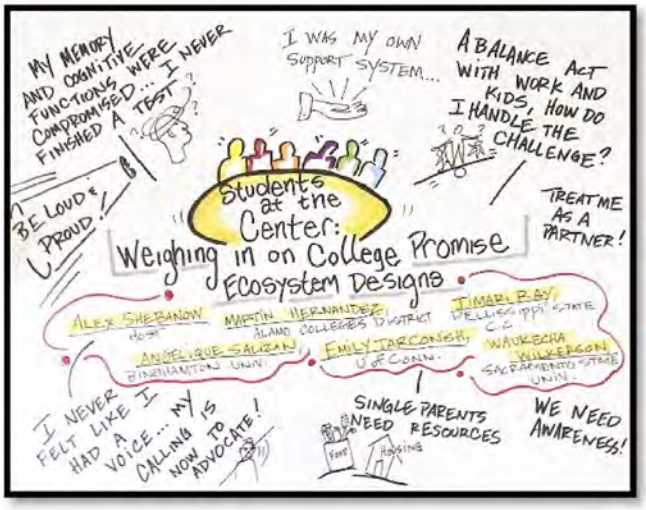

Figure 3.1 Capturing student input. Sketchnote of symposium discussion by Maria Evans. Copyright 2021 by Educational Testing Service.

Tarconish suggested two supports she believed every college should have for students with disabilities: an ongoing awareness campaign about disability services and, as part of diversity programming, support staff, clubs, and events for students who are disabled. She noted, "When we look at diversity offices, they don't always highlight disability." She said the message seems to be that disability "is not part of diversity."

Waukecha Wilkerson (Student Parents Team)

Waukecha Wilkerson was a senior in a bachelor's program in psychology at Sacramento State University. She is a single mom of three children and spoke on behalf of her own and other parenting students' experiences. Wilkerson had multiple false starts in college because she was not aware of the resources and programs available to parenting students. Project Self-Sufficiency in Orange County, California, made the difference: It provided wraparound services to single parents attending college. That led to traditional supports, such as scholarship opportunities, food pantry services, rental assistance, and childcare services. But those came later. Wilkerson noted that because she was working and earning money prior to college, she did not qualify for those services. "I didn't know there was a community like me of parents returning to college," she said. "Project Self-Sufficiency gave me that." Her advice to college leaders is twofold: "identify and destigmatize" and "opt in, not out." For example, she suggested that food pantries could be renamed "nutritional services" to destigmatize those who use the services. She also suggested that once a college identifies a student as a single parent, the student should be automatically enrolled in all qualifying services. If a student does not need the service, it would be the student's responsibility to opt out. It is from Wilkerson that we took the title of this section: opt out, not in.

Angelique Salizan (Students in or Aged Out of Foster Care)

Angelique Salizan earned a bachelor's at Binghamton University and a master's in policy management at Georgetown University. Salizan reminded participants that every foster youth has a unique experience and should be assessed individually. "Education leads to self-sufficiency, and foster youth really need that," she said. Although Salizan was responsible for making sure all of her applications were complete, she also had a foster care agency that communicated with the college about tuition payments and financial arrangements. She remembered friends in foster care who had their courses dropped because of poor communication between the agency and the college. She also mentioned foster youth who take out loans but are unable to finish and stuck with the debt anyway. In her case, "there were resources provided to me [scholarships] that helped me and put a cushion under me, a safety net, so I could focus on my academics." Salizan also emphasized the importance of mental health supports, housing, and health care as part of the ecosystem that ensures the success of foster youth.

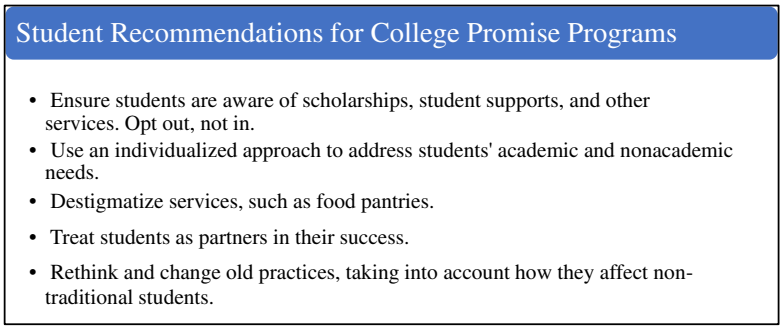

Figure 3.2 Student recommendations for college promise programs.

Takeaways From Students

As each of the five students shared their educational journeys and connected with fellow student panelists about common experiences, the multiple dimensions of their lives came to the fore. For example, Martin Hernandez, who was asked to speak about his academic preparedness for college, also discussed how being a student parent influenced his experience. These are the first examples of students and design teams referencing intersectionality, which refers to the multiple attributes and experiences that affect the student experience. This theme of intersectionality will arise throughout the report.

Students' observations, insights, and suggestions illuminated the common experiences and concerns among all five student populations. Taking them together, we developed five primary recommendations for college promise programs (see Figure 3.2).

Although the students who participated in the panel spoke from diverse perspectives, every student emphasized the importance of knowing about campus and community services. Wilkerson underscored this point, saying that she would have had far fewer false starts in college had she known about programs like Project Self-Sufficiency. Tarconish's account of not knowing that disability services were available to her as an undergraduate left her feeling alone and unsupported. By contrast, both Ray and Salizan praised the mentors and organizations that helped them navigate to and through college. They credited these supports with helping them to stay in college and graduate. As a student in the Tennessee Promise program, Ray was automatically enrolled in support services provided by Tennessee Achieves, what Wilkerson referred as "opt out, not in."

In addition to automatically enrolling students in services, access to services should be increased and, importantly, destigmatized. Language choice is important when interacting with students for determining and clarifying the services provided and to ensure that they do not feel condescended to and, thus, marginalized (e.g., "nutritional services" instead of "food pantries"). Students must be treated as equals and partners in their success. Like everyone else, they are determined to succeed and want to be involved in their own journeys rather than being treated as charity cases.

Higher education institutions and college promise programs should provide stronger support systems. Most of the students emphasized that they did not have access to a community of people like them or to other important individuals, which made their college journeys more difficult. While organizations have made progress, the progress must be greater and steadier. Institutions must abandon the mentality that says "the way things have always been" is the way they should always be and, instead, need to catch up with advances and evolutions in technology, society, and the way people communicate, all in order to better serve students.

Design Team SPARK Talks

On the first and third days of the symposium, each design team gave a SPARK Talk. These 10-minute presentations allowed one person from each team to share the big ideas from their ecosystem designs and insights on the college promise ecosystem work (see Figure 3.3). Building a system of support includes addressing how and if students' basic needs are met, in addition to more general academic and financial supports.

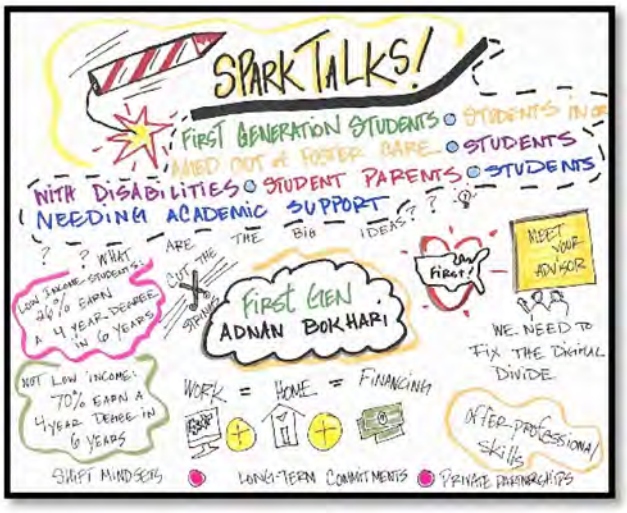

Figure 3.3 Major SPARK Talk points. Sketchnote of symposium discussion by Maria Evans. Copyright 2021 by Educational Testing Service.

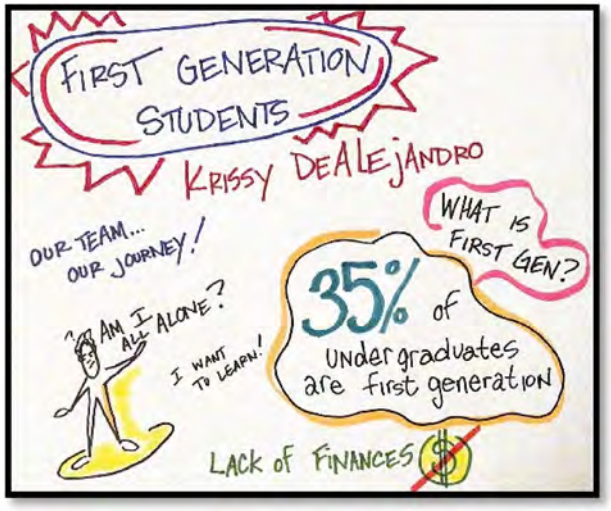

Figure 3.4 Depiction of first-generation students' demographic information and obstacles to postsecondary attainment. Sketchnote of symposium discussion by Maria Evans. Copyright 2021 by Educational Testing Service.

First-Generation College Students

Thirty-five percent of college undergraduates are first-generation students. First-generation students face many inequities, including income inequity, and must contend with lack of cultural capital and knowledge on how to navigate the college landscape. They also face difficult bureaucratic structures, work and home commitments in addition to their coursework, and unmet financial needs, all of which contribute to disparities in rates of degree attainment. One proposed solution is to scale up existing college programs and increase the number of college programs that target this population. Soft-skills development should be a priority within these programs, and program-provided advising should be opt out to ensure that students get the services they need (see Figure 3.4).

Students in or Aged Out of Foster Care

There are 400,000 foster youths in the United States, 20,000 of whom age out[8] of the foster care system starting at age 18 years. Among former foster youth who attend college, only 26% earn a postsecondary credential, compared to 56% of

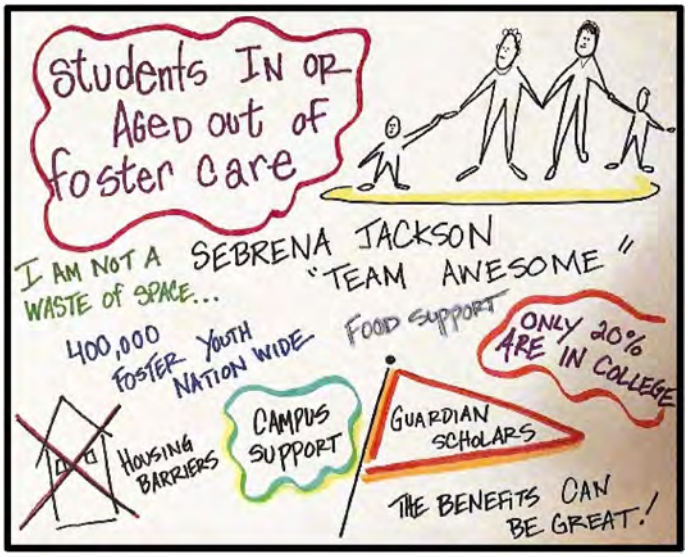

Figure 3.5 Depiction of the demographic information and obstacles to postsecondary attainment of students in or aged out of foster care. Sketchnote of symposium discussion by Maria Evans. Copyright 2021 by Educational Testing Service.

their peers. Barriers to matriculation and degree attainment include issues related to trauma, educational deficiencies, and meeting personal needs. These issues manifest as housing insecurity, lack of adult support, and unpreparedness for living independently. These students must also contend with mental health and emotional support issues (Johnson, 2019).

While there are existing funds, such as the Chafee Foster Care Independence Program, Education Training Vouchers, and Pell Grants, and college access programs, there is still a substantial unmet need. One proposed solution is to create campus support programs that collaborate with local foster care and other agencies in the college communities. These programs would have designated spaces on campus for former foster youth to interact with each other, paid for by braiding together existing funds. Other proposed solutions included acceptance of Medicaid in on-campus health clinics and counseling centers, expansion of the lifetime limit of Pell Grants, and provision of personal supports, potentially via infrastructure bill dollars (see Figure 3.5).

Students With Disabilities

Fourteen percent of high school students are classified as disabled under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) (2004). Of these, 82% graduate from high school or earn an alternative diploma (NCES, n.d.-c), compared to 86% of all students (NCES, n.d.-b). At the postsecondary level, 19% of undergraduate and 11% of graduate enrolled students report a disability, though these numbers may be higher since students with disabilities do not always report their disability to the college's disability services (NCES, n.d.-a). The reason for this lack of identification is twofold. First, for many students and their families, the high cost of getting the disability documentation needed to receive accommodations, which insurance typically does not cover, is prohibitive. Second, many students fear being stigmatized. Another major barrier that students with disabilities face in trying to earn a postsecondary credential is the cost of many essential resources, supports, and services associated with their disability, including medications, therapeutic services, academic support, and assistive technology, as well as costs unrelated to their disability, such as transportation and childcare. Insurance often does not cover such costs or services, and few scholarships target disabled students; meanwhile, the scholarships that do target these students tend to be very specific, limiting the number of students with disabilities who can receive them. In addition, although disability services offices exist, students with disabilities may not know about them or the paperwork needed to receive the accommodations disability services provide.

One of the proposed solutions was to create funding mechanisms to support disabled students' needs. Using an economic development approach and creating partnerships with the public and private sectors can help. This design team recommends that (a) scholarship and financial aid policies like those affecting Pell Grants be adjusted so that students

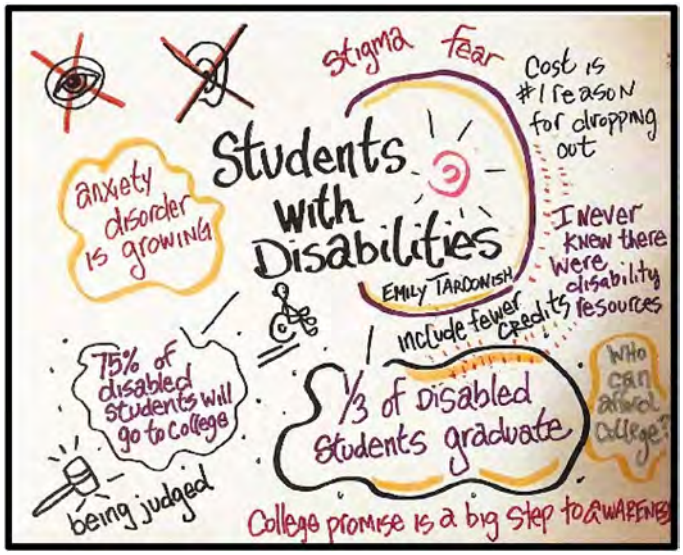

Figure 3.6 Depiction of the demographic information and obstacles to postsecondary attainment for students with disabilities. Sketchnote of symposium discussion by Maria Evans. Copyright 2021 by Educational Testing Service.

with reduced course loads can still get full funding for classes; (b) funding be provided for national training about disability awareness, types of accommodations, and disabled students' legal rights; and (c) high school teachers and staff help prepare disabled students to perform well in college and gain access to resources (see Figure 3.6).

Student Parents

Four million undergraduates, or 22%, are student parents. Student parents overlap with several other marginalized groups. Forty percent of African American women and 33% of Indigenous women are student mothers, one-half of student mothers are first-generation students, and most student parents are aged 30 years or older. Student parents are more likely to experience food and housing insecurity than their nonparenting counterparts. They spend 9 hours a day on childcare and housework; about half work at least 25 hours a week as well. Thus student parents have less time for coursework. They referred to this as "time poverty." These factors may contribute to the low 17% graduation rate.

Although there are federal programs that help students and parents—the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Head Start, the Childcare Development Block Grant (CCDBG), child tax benefits, Pell Grants, and, most recently, the American Recovery Plan—too few focus on student parents specifically. The Childcare Access Means Parents in School (CCAMPIS) program does target student parents, but it is a small program. State and local funding is also available, but it is more vulnerable to recessions than federal funding. Combined with institutional administrations not designing their campuses to help student parents, these factors make student parents feel like outliers.

The proposed solution was a college promise model that includes childcare support (ideally, it would be predictable, affordable, high quality, and dependable); wraparound supports, including coaching and case management; and more financial support to address unmet needs. They also recommended that campus health centers have pediatricians and obstetricians available and that food pantries provide baby food and diapers. Last was a call for campus-based policies that better accommodate student parents—for example, allowing for excused absences for family issues (see Figure 3.7).

Students Needing Academic Support

Approximately 60% of public 2-year and 32% of public 4-year students enroll in developmental education, which costs at least $4 billion each year plus government funding. Students who are placed into developmental education courses may drop out due to the number of courses they need to take before they are equipped for college-level coursework.

One proposed solution was using multiple measures instead of one placement test when placing students into courses. Relying on only one form of measurement for course placement can result in students who are capable of college-level

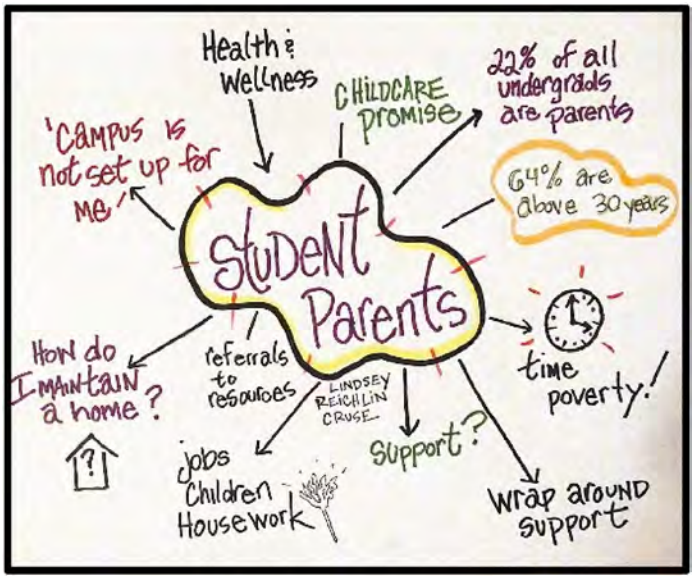

Figure 3.7 Depiction of demographic information and obstacles to postsecondary attainment for student parents. Sketchnote of symposium discussion by Maria Evans. Copyright 2021 by Educational Testing Service.

Figure 3.8 Depiction of major points from students needing academic support SPARK talk. Sketchnote of symposium discussion by Maria Evans. Copyright 2021 by Educational Testing Service.

work being mistakenly placed into developmental education courses. Using multiple academic indicators may avoid incorrect placement. It was also suggested that institutions provide stronger preenrollment orientation and college transition programs that include academic support and access to campus resources, as well as developmental courses that students can take in the same semester as the college-level course. In addition, it was recommended that institutions create different pathways by major to ensure that students do not take developmental courses they do not need.

To help implement these reforms, it was suggested that faculty receive professional development on alternative pathways or developmental education reforms. Reviewing existing institutional structures to see how to reallocate resources and existing funding to address student needs was also suggested. As reform efforts require new ways of combining student academic information and providing that information to those who help students, institutions will need to invest in data systems and training for staff to use them (see Figure 3.8).

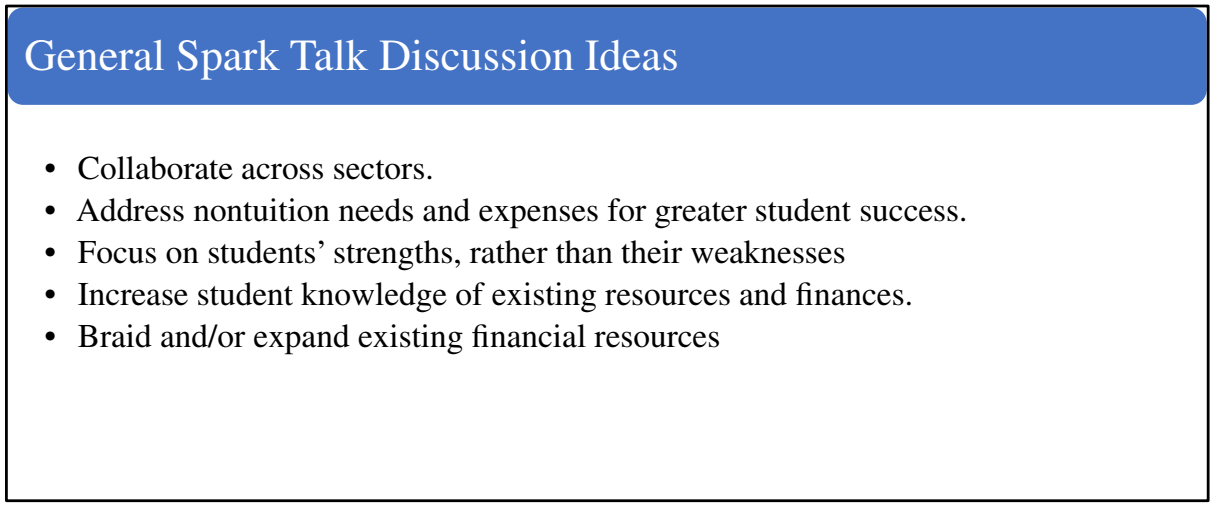

Figure 3.9 General SPARK Talk discussion ideas.

General SPARK Talks Discussion Ideas

Five ideas emerged from the SPARK Talks (see Figure 3.9).

Collaborate Across Sectors

College promise programs, K–12 education, higher education, and other stakeholder groups should work together to ensure student success. This would not only create a stronger support network but also eliminate redundancy within organizations, spread knowledge among the groups that support students, and reduce costs.

Address Nontuition Needs and Expenses for Greater Student Success

All groups emphasized the need for more funding for nontuition support, as students are often bogged down by nontuition expenses. For example, student parents need childcare to free up time to dedicate to their studies. Students with disabilities need financial aid for disability-related services, such as medication and therapeutic services, and documentation. All five populations need housing, health care, mental health services, and transportation. Having these services increases the likelihood that students will persist in and complete their education.

Focus on Students' Strengths, Rather Than on Their Weaknesses

The groups stated that it was important to look not only at these students' struggles and setbacks but also at their strengths and successes.

Increase Student Knowledge of Existing Resources and Finances

Multiple groups, along with the student guests, noted that students are not always aware of the services, scholarships, and other resources available to them. Thus higher education institutions and college promise programs must inform students of what is available.

Braid and/or Expand Existing Financial Resources

Braiding existing funding can make services more accessible and college education more affordable. One example of braided funding would be to combine Chafee funds with U.S. Department of Education funds to pay for campus retention programs. Chafee funds are from the Chafee Foster Care Independence Program (CFCIP), created as part of the 1999 Foster Care Independence Act. Other examples would be to use funds from the newly enacted infrastructure bill on

Figure 3.10 Depiction of major points raised by postsecondary perspectives panelists. Sketchnote of symposium discussion by Maria Evans. Copyright 2021 by Educational Testing Service.

broadband internet service for virtual classes and on transportation for students attending classes in person. The groups also suggested expanding Pell Grants from 12 semesters to 14, as marginalized students take longer to earn their degrees than nonmarginalized students, and adjusting Pell Grant policy to enable students who need to take reduced course loads to receive full funding.

Postsecondary Leader Perspectives

On the first day of the symposium, ETS and College Promise brought three leaders from postsecondary institutions to join moderator Michael Nettles, senior vice president of policy evaluation and research and the Edmund Gordon Chair at ETS, to offer advice and discuss their experiences and recommendations for financial sustainability (see Figure 3.10).

During that discussion, Nancy Cantor, chancellor of Rutgers University–Newark, made it clear that Rutgers's success at supporting students can be attributed to an ecosystem approach to developing policy solutions to meet students' needs. Rutgers is part of the Newark Anchor Collaborative, a community of practice with the express purpose of growing the Newark economy and serving Newark's residents. Rutgers, partnering with the city of Newark, started the Hire.Buy.Live.Newark program, whose participants agree to hire local residents, buy from local businesses, and provide residential incentives to live in Newark.

While the Anchor Collaborative and the Hire.Buy.Live.Newark program are citywide policy initiatives, Rutgers also has an ecosystem of student support programs, including a promise program for newly graduated high school students. The Scarlet Promise Grant, supported by the Rutgers University Foundation, is a last-dollar grant that supports tuition and expenses for college students with an expected family contribution of $10,000 or less. The Rutgers University–Newark Talent and Opportunity Pathways financial aid program (RU-N to the TOP) provides last-dollar scholarships to community college graduates, using similar guidelines as the promise program. Rutgers also provides coursework to the state prison system through the New Jersey Scholarship and Transformative Education in Prisons (NJ-STEP) initiative. The program includes supports to help individuals transition from prison to the college campus.

The Scarlet Promise Grant is funded by the university's operating budget and philanthropic donations made to a focused fundraising campaign. RU-N to the TOP is supported by operating dollars, and the NJ-STEP program is primarily supported through foundation giving, while Rutgers provides administrative support.

Rutgers also has on-campus programs to support student success, including an honors living-learning community dedicated to creating social justice leaders for the next generation. Cantor said the community draws students from the promise program, NJ-STEP, students with disabilities, students without documentation, students who have aged out of foster care, and student parents, among others. The Career Development Center at Rutgers offers a program called Accelerate Your Career with Braven that targets first-generation students who may need professional skills practice as

well as networking. RU-N4SUCCESS is a Rutgers advising platform that facilitates student advising and course scheduling services. Finally, the Newark City of Learning Collaborative links colleges with high schools to provide dual-credit coursework and summer bridge programming for students from low-income households and first-generation students.

Cantor began her talk acknowledging that Newark is a "city of color built on immigration and migration with wealthy suburbs and large corporations, but a population that lives the wealth gap." She stressed that all these programs are "part of the ecosystem for developing equitable growth." In all, Cantor's description of the Rutgers policy landscape offers leaders in other locations a way to think about and locate their own college promise programs within their policy ecosystems.

Constance Carroll, chancellor of the San Diego Community College District, told the story of a Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) student who worked five part-time jobs for the money he would need if he were deported. An outreach counselor at a San Diego Community College connected with the student, and he enrolled in college courses. He then ran for and was elected president of the student government, and when his term was complete, he was appointed a college trustee. He graduated from City College and is now in his senior year at the University of California, Berkeley. Carroll said, "This would not have been possible without a promise program and an outreach counselor, who told the student that he was talented and then connected him with services that were aligned to meet his needs."

The San Diego Community College district comprises four colleges and 100,000 students. In 2016, the college self-funded a pilot promise program for 186 students. The program has grown to 6,500 students; it is funded through state dollars and philanthropic giving. Although eligibility requirements include being a recent high school graduate, there are spots for students who do not meet all the requirements, including former foster youth, formerly incarcerated individuals, returning adults, and DACA recipients. "Our promise program mirrors our community," Carroll noted. "Fifty percent are Latinx, 15% Black, 17% Asian, and 18% White." She said that her leadership team is constantly asking "how do we address this diverse student population through an equity standpoint, which requires different treatment of different students?"

Carroll noted that the per-unit cost in California is $46. "It's the most affordable in America," she said, although for some low-income students, it is still too high. The tuition waiver that comes with the promise program is a "game changer." In addition to the tuition waiver, the San Diego promise program offers book grants, access to peer mentoring and success coaches, and individualized counseling on academic goals. Carroll also highlighted the Puente college preparation program that combines English language instruction; academic, personal, and career counseling; and mentoring to support Latinx students through college.

Mike Flores, chancellor of the Alamo Colleges District, began by noting that San Antonio "has the distinction of having the highest urban poverty rate in the United States," adding, "We are aware of whom we serve." The Alamo Colleges District comprises five community colleges and 65,000 students, 78% of whom are students of color. Flores described the college district as the largest higher education provider in central Texas and the largest producer of talent in the community, with a focus on producing locally grown talent.

"College is possible" is an important message to San Antonio–area residents. Alamo Promise was launched during the pandemic with 25 high schools participating. Despite the challenges of COVID-19, more than 3,000 high school students joined the program. To minimize students' fears of the application process, Alamo Promise calls the application the Save Your Seat form. The application and benefits are not one-size-fits-all. Rather, special populations are treated differently depending on needs—students with disabilities, veterans, foster youth, DACA students, and senior citizens are all given special consideration. Alamo Promise is also distinctive in that it is a six-semester program, so students have 3 years to finish an associate's degree. They also provide summer gap funding through a program called the Expanded Summer Momentum Program.

Because it is a last-dollar program, half of the funding for Alamo Promise comes from Pell Grants and other federal grant programs. The other half, Flores said, comes from the city, the county, and the community college district, with each contributing one-third of the funds. For the community college district's portion, half comes from operating funds and half comes from private donors. Flores mentioned that $10 million had been raised privately.

Finally, Flores said the outreach campaign for promise funding was premised on the economic value of the program. After commissioning an economic study of the program, he was able to argue that the program would increase revenue from sales, property, and wage taxes; that it would drive entrepreneurial activity in the region; and that it would reduce the burden of debt on students. Flores also worked with the public sector to secure funding not just for tuition but also for services. "We're calling it braided funding," he said. For example, the medical school provides health clinics, and area

Takeaways from the Postsecondary Perspectives Panelists

- When designing promise programs, do not use a one-size-fits all design, rather treat special populations according to their unique needs.
- Provide nontuition supports, such as child care, reduced course loads, nutritional services,and housing, by networking within the community.
- Campaign for funding by describing the long-term economic benefits of promise programs for communities.
- Destigmatize application procedures and student support services through renaming and online access.
- Build a network of outreach conselors to connect to marginalized students.

Figure 3.11 Postsecondary perspectives panelists' recommendations for college promise programs.

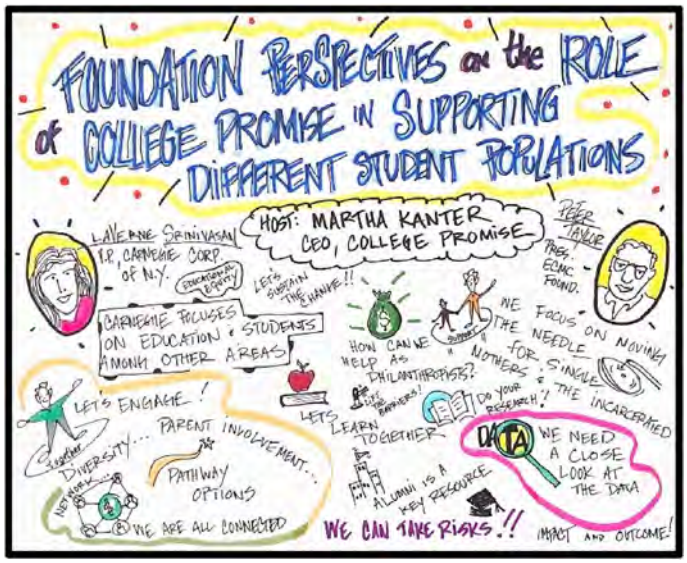

Figure 3.12 Depiction of major points raised by foundation perspectives panelists. Sketchnote of symposium discussion by Maria Evans. Copyright 2021 by Educational Testing Service.

food banks provide food support. "It's an ecosystem," he said, "and we're one player of multiple players in providing the wraparound services our students need."

There was agreement that college promise programs should provide nontuition supports to eliminate barriers to students' academic success. To help fund these services, each leader builds relationships around their respective communities, including private philanthropy and public service entities. For a full summary of the panel's takeaways, see Figure 3.11.

Foundation Leader Perspectives

On the final day of the symposium, ETS and College Promise brought two leaders from philanthropic foundations to join moderator Martha Kanter, executive director of College Promise, in a discussion of the role of philanthropy and recommendations for funding and sustainability (see Figure 3.12).

LaVerne Srinivasan, vice president of Carnegie Corporation of New York's National Program and program director for education, stated that philanthropic foundations can draw stakeholders together to develop solutions for students and conduct and disseminate research on "what's working and what's not" in education. When it comes to providing wraparound services at community colleges, organizations interested in working with foundations should think about what funding sources and stakeholder groups could benefit and then approach them. For organizations working with foundations, she stressed the importance of communication—explaining any issues and successes they encounter—and of being "PR tenacious." Organizations should have their own vision and strategy and be ready to express the importance

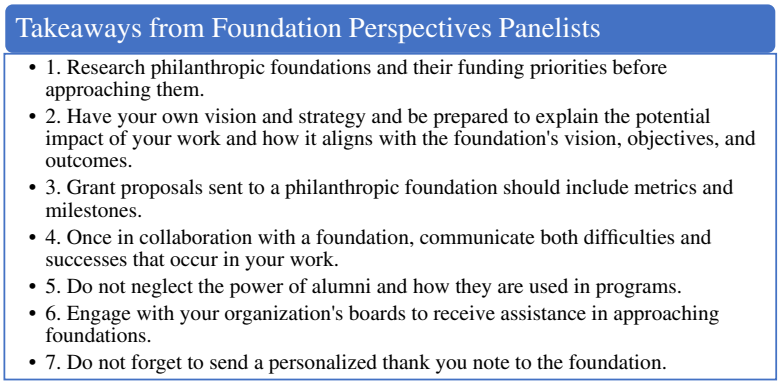

Figure 3.13 Foundation perspectives panelists' recommendations for college promise programs.

and potential impact of their work and its relevance to the foundation's vision, objectives, and outcomes. Any grant proposal an organization submits should identify milestones and metrics that it views as important, and then it should track the outcomes they can achieve.

Peter Taylor, president of ECMC Foundation, discussed philanthropy's role in helping fund and support new ideas and in acquiring the data needed to persuade policy makers to invest in promising ideas and programs. Taylor stated that individuals should research a foundation and its funding priorities before submitting grant proposals. One purpose would be for the prospective grantee to think about how its programs and initiatives might relate to the foundation's interests and activities and how, as a grantee, the organization might bring something different to the foundation's work. How can the prospective grantee leverage what the foundation learned from previous grants as a way of helping the foundation and building on its previous work? The prospective grantee should not hesitate to request an in-person visit to the foundation. Taylor recommended that prospective grantees at college and universities reach out to alumni who may have contacts at the foundation and with foundation board members. These individuals can provide introductions and context and help when making pitches. In addition, funders and foundations like to see organizations partnering and leveraging resources. And he reminded us that the simple courtesies can go a long way: "Don't forget to say thank you. … A personalized, handwritten note makes a bigger impact than a letter written on a computer and sent by email." For a full summary of the panel's takeaways, see Figure 3.13.

State and Federal Government Perspectives

Given the visibility of college promise programs at the state and federal levels, ETS and College Promise asked two speakers to discuss their work both to capture a successful college promise model and for a glimpse into future plans for college promise programs and higher education.

On the first day, Bill Haslam, former governor of the state of Tennessee, recounted the history of, and his role in, the Tennessee Promise. Haslam stated that the program's goal "was to change the conversations around dinner tables around the state from 'What am I going to do after high school?' to 'Where am I going to go to college?'" He stressed the importance of providing wraparound services and connecting college promise programs to the K–12 institutions to ensure that students enter college prepared and that they receive the support they need to earn a degree (see Figure 3.14).

Michelle Asha Cooper, acting assistant secretary for postsecondary education and deputy assistant secretary for higher education programs at the U.S. Department of Education, explained the Biden administration's plans and actions for improving college access and completion. She cited the American Rescue Plan, which allocated $40 billion to higher education via institutional and student grants to help higher education emerge from the pandemic stronger. Cooper also discussed President Biden's plans for free community college programs and doubling the Pell Grant. In addition, she announced President Biden's plan to create a $62 billion grant program to help colleges that serve the most low-income students execute evidence-based efforts to raise retention and graduation, potentially including advising, wraparound services, improved transfer policies, and emergency grant aid. She also mentioned that President Biden wanted to invest $50 billion in workforce development programs and worker protections, funding that will help "create and support partnerships between community colleges, 4-year institutions, businesses, apprenticeship providers and others" (see Figure 3.15).

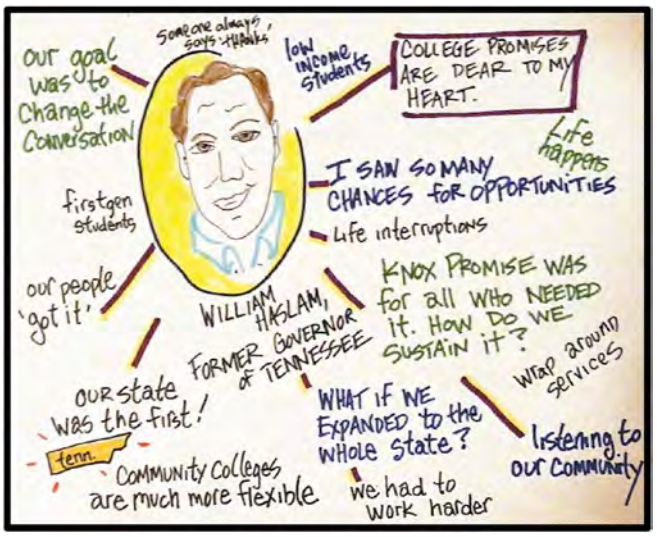

Figure 3.14 Highlights of former Tennessee governor Bill Haslam's remarks. Sketchnote of symposium discussion by Maria Evans. Copyright 2021 by Educational Testing Service.

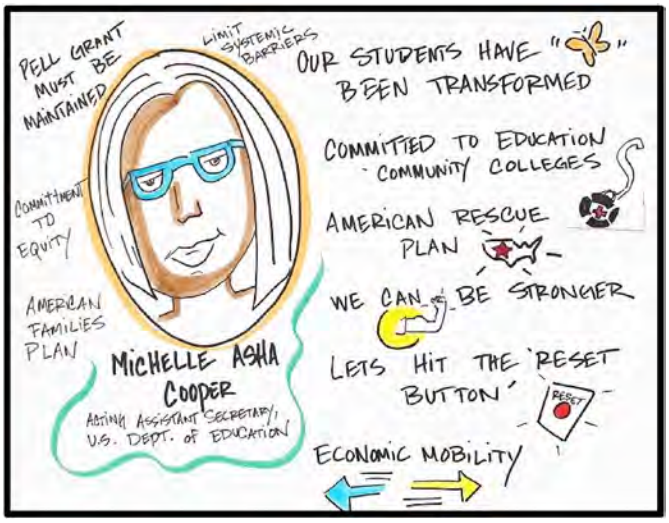

Figure 3.15 Highlights of acting assistant secretary Michelle Asha Cooper's remarks. Sketchnote of symposium discussion by Maria Evans. Copyright 2021 by Educational Testing Service.

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4. First-Generation College Students

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Among experts and researchers of higher education in the United States, it is common to argue that the COVID-19 pandemic has laid bare the systemic inequities and underlying barriers facing first-generation college-goers.[9] And yet, emerging studies on the impact of the crisis on first-generation students firmly agree that these new challenges are coming to rest on old inequities that kept many low-income and first-generation Americans from attending college or earning a degree. The Hunt Institute (2021) concluded,

> First-generation students of color and of other marginalized backgrounds often face intersectional difficulty during their educational journey, and these difficulties have been exacerbated by the disproportionate consequences of the coronavirus pandemic (para. 3).

It added,

> a year into the pandemic, thousands of students still struggle to obtain the reliable technology necessary to complete online coursework. The persistent digital divide continues to disproportionately impact students of color, low-income families, and students from rural communities — many of whom also identify as first generation (Hunt Institute, 2021, para. 4).

According to the Indicators of Higher Education Equity in the United States 2020 Historical Trend Report by the Pell Institute for the Study of Opportunity in Higher Education, "while enrollment has increased, systemic barriers persistently prevent high completion rates for low-income and first-generation students" (2022, bullet 8). The report's authors found that for every 100 low-income and first-generation dependent students who enrolled in college in 2011–2012, only 21 had completed a 4-year degree 6 years later, compared with 66% of students who are not low income or first-generation (Cahalan et al., 2020). It also underscored that, "paying for college has never been harder, and that those who attend are more likely to leave burdened with debt, whether or not they graduate" (Pell Institute, 2022, para. 11).

The disappointing truth of this uneven landscape is that prior to the pandemic, first-generation students in American colleges and universities faced institutional, financial, and bureaucratic obstacles. In 2018, the U.S. Department of Education issued a report on the college access, persistence, and postbachelor outcomes of first-generation college students; it concluded that these students are less likely to enroll in postsecondary education than their peers whose parents either attended some college or earned a bachelor's degree (72%, 84%, and 93%, respectively) and are more likely to leave a postsecondary education without a credential than their peers whose parents either attended some college or earned a bachelor's degree (33%, 26%, and 14%, respectively; Cataldi et al., 2018). For these students, barriers to college completion and career success exist across a spectrum of frameworks and systems relating to financial structures, work and home commitments, cultural capital,[10] and bureaucratic limitations (Stebleton & Soria, 2012).

During the COVID-19 crisis, this range of obstacles to first-generation college student success was exacerbated by a widening wealth gap and deepening digital divide. In a SERU Consortium survey of 28,198 undergraduate students conducted May–July 2020 at nine universities, first-generation students were found to be more likely than continuing-generation students to experience financial hardships during the pandemic, including family members' lost wages, their own lost wages from on- or off-campus employment, and increased living and technology expenses. In addition to lost wages or increased expenses, the SERU study drew attention to the availability of resources to participate in academic activities. The study found that 85% of students who have had access to only one computer device during the pandemic were classified as underserved (low income, first-generation, or minority). Furthermore, nearly 47% of these students depended exclusively on the inferior tool of a cell phone data plan for internet access (Soria et al., 2020b).

In this chapter, we examine six barriers unique to the journey of first-generation students: (a) preparing for college-level work, (b) navigating the transition to higher education, (c) financing a college degree, (d) raising student awareness

about the range of services offered by academic advising and career planning and placement, (e) attaining a degree, and (f) employment and earnings of degree holders.

In the conclusion, we reimagine the first-generation student's road map to success and explore ways that this can serve as a model for ambitious and meaningful change centered on the student experience that college promise programs could advocate for their students. We offer recommendations for researchers and policy makers and discuss the implications for the delivery of services to students that advance solutions for improving the quality of and enhancing access to supports and services for first-generation students.

Defining Who a First-Generation Student Is

It is widely understood that identifying first-generation students presents complications for institutions and organizations as well as for the students, parents, and/or guardians they serve. Yet little has been done to resolve these inconsistencies through a uniform definition of first-generation status. Loosely defined, the term *first-generation* has come to be categorized as the first in a family to attend college.

The NCES, the primary federal entity for collecting and analyzing data related to education, defines first-generation college students as "students who enrolled in postsecondary education and whose parents do not have any postsecondary education experience" (Redford & Hoyer, 2017, p. 3). Researchers and policy makers, however, have varying ideas of who a first-generation college student is. Toutkoushian and colleagues analyzed eight different definitions of the term, using data from a longitudinal study begun in 2002, and found that the number of students who could be called first-generation in a 7,300-student sample ranged from 22% to 77% (Sharpe, 2017). While some may include students who only have one college-educated parent, others define the term based on their idea of what "went to college" means, the type of institution a student's parents attended, or who is considered a parent (Toutkoushian et al., 2018).

A recent report by the National Association of Student Personnel Administrators (NASPA) on the institutional support practices for first-generation students in community and technical colleges found that just over half of these colleges reported having a specialized formal definition of first-generation students, leading to widespread complaints of difficulties using data consistently across campus programs (Karp et al., 2020). According to the study, nearly three-quarters of community colleges used a consistent formal definition of first-generation students across programs and services within their institutions. Of respondents, 13% reported their institution maintained multiple definitions, and another 13% were unsure (Karp et al., 2020).

How "first-generation" is defined can impact the types of support available to students. NASPA notes that stakeholders indicated that a broader definition allowed them to focus on the underlying needs of first-generation students rather than on specific family structures but also emphasized that students often find the language in admissions applications and other data collection sources confusing and unwelcoming (Karp et al., 2020). The Center for First-Generation Student Success (CFGSS, 2017) raises another point about terminology—"the term 'first-generation' implies the possibility that a student may lack the critical cultural capital necessary for college success because their parents did not attend college" (para. 5).

Despite the definitional challenges, there is a general profile of students who enter college as first-generation students. As of academic year 2015–2016, 35% of U.S. undergraduates were first-generation students (PNPI, 2021). First-generation college students are usually older than students whose parents have degrees, and they are disproportionally women, African American or Hispanic, student parents, and children of parents with lower incomes than those of their non-first-generation counterparts (Engle, 2007; RTI International, 2019). They are less likely than non-first-generation college students to attend highly resourced K–12 schools, take advanced coursework while in high school (e.g., calculus, *AP*® or International Baccalaureate courses), enroll in college within 3 months of finishing high school, and attend highly or moderately selective 4-year institutions (Cataldi et al., 2018; Havlik et al., 2020; Redford & Hoyer, 2017).

Inequities and Barriers

Disparities in Preparation for College-Level Work

Inadequate preparation for college-level work is a major impediment facing most students attending open-admission colleges. This is particularly true for first-generation students, who often lack the practical guidance from family members who attended college. In most states, more than half the students attending open-admission colleges fail college

placement tests and are required to take remedial courses (Complete College America, 2012). Even with additional academic support, most of these students leave college without credentials — after about 5 years, only 25% obtain a degree (Chen, 2021).

One of the underlying problems facing first-generation students is that it takes years to develop the skills to succeed in college. For students pursuing 4-year degrees, barely passing the placement tests has a low correlation with college completion (Allensworth & Clark, 2020). This makes sense given that grades reflect a greater range of competencies than test scores — competencies that include nonachievement factors, including attitudes, behavior, and effort (Galla et al., 2019). It also is consistent with evidence that high school grades are highly correlated with college completion, while standardized test scores add additional predictive value once grades are taken into account (Allensworth & Clark, 2020).

Navigating the Transition to Higher Education

Choy (2001) noted that first-generation college students often report lacking a sense of belonging and support as they transition to college. They also cite challenges associated with navigating the bureaucratic structures associated with college enrollment and completion. The norms or unwritten rules of college leave many first-generation college students feeling alone on their postsecondary journeys. The complex jargon and unknown acronyms of college often isolate first-generation college students. The importance of creating and sustaining supports specifically targeted at bolstering first-generation college success remains critical to leveling the playing field and increasing their college completion rates (Choy, 2001).

Colleges, universities, and nonprofits dedicated to increasing first-generation student success must develop a deep understanding of their unique complexities and challenges and embrace their potential (Longwell-Grice et al., 2016). A recent NASPA study reports 62% of first-generation respondents use general campus supports rather than more targeted guidance (Karp et al., 2020). This extends beyond academic supports and often requires colleges to assist first-generation college students with navigating life while also juggling their college courses. Many institutions offer supports via advisers, coaches, and/or mentors, but the depth and breadth of these supports vary greatly, despite research indicating a strong correlation between first-generation college completion and a robust advising program. An adviser who is dedicated to lighting the path to a college degree proves to be a game changer for first-generation students (Longwell-Grice et al., 2016).

Also, upon entering postsecondary education, first-generation students may experience feelings of not belonging and of being othered[11] by faculty and their peers (Havlik et al., 2020; McCoy, 2014). These experiences of invalidation and sometimes racism erode the persistence, resilience, and pride that many of these students had when they came to college (Havlik et al., 2020). Difficulties with coursework may add to their hardships. First-generation students report repeated instances of condescension and social isolation; distracting and draining family commitments; and difficulties capitalizing on the unspoken expectations of the college experience, such as interacting with professors, identifying and cultivating mentors, and balancing multiple responsibilities as a student, such as school and work (Moody, 2019).

First-generation students are often reluctant to seek help from others due to fears of being a burden, being judged, or making the situation worse (Chang et al., 2019). These students are also more likely to report stress and depression to friends, family, and others in their personal network than do non-first-generation college students (Stebleton et al., 2014) and to experience negative emotional health (Stebleton & Soria, 2012). However, they are less likely to seek mental health services (Stebleton et al., 2014).

Creating a more welcoming environment may help first-generation college students succeed. They may benefit from having faculty who were first-generation students and/or people of color themselves to serve as mentors to help them transition to the college environment and experience. Other faculty and college counselors can participate in orientation and other student programs to interact with first-generation students and provide information on services, such as academic support centers and mental health options. Higher education institutions can also form intra-institutional partnerships to coach these students on using office hours and acquaint students with their professors as well as create programs that target first-generation students (McCoy, 2014; Soria & Stebleton, 2012; Stebleton et al., 2014). Creating and sustaining supports, both academic and cultural, specifically for first-generation students are critical to their college success.

Financing a College Degree

The spring 2021 data from the National Student Clearinghouse Research Center indicates that overall undergraduate enrollment fell 5.9% compared to spring 2020. Community colleges have been especially hard hit, with an enrollment decrease of 11.3% from spring 2020 to spring 2021, compared to a year-over-year decrease of 9.5% in fall 2020 (Weissman, 2021). The enrollment decline of first-generation students (Howell et al., 2021) in connection with this dramatic enrollment decline at community colleges cannot be overstated and requires immediate attention and action. One such opportunity for action to mitigate these declines may be in the form of financial assistance awarded to students.

The Postsecondary National Policy Institute (2021), in its prepandemic profile of first-generation students in higher education, noted that,

> First-generation students had a lower median household income and more unmet financial need than students whose parents attended college. The median family income for first-generation freshmen at two- and four-year institutions was $37,565, compared to $99,635 for continuing-generation freshmen. (n.p.)

Postsecondary National Policy Institute (2021) went on to cite a 2008 Pell Institute study that placed:

> the mean average of unmet financial need for low-income, first-generation students at nearly $6,000 (before loans), which represented half of their median annual income of $12,100. As a result of this shortfall, these students worked and borrowed more than their peers, with negative consequences for college completion. (n.p.)

The Postsecondary National Policy Institute (2021) also reported that:

> 27% of first-generation students came from households making $20,000 or less, compared with 6% of continuing-generation freshmen. In fact, first-generation students are borrowing from the federal government at increasingly higher levels to pay for their education (from 15% in 1997 to approximately 37% in 2013) and attend institutions that are in the bottom quartile in default rate measurements, at 46%. (n.p.)

This results in first-generation students being nearly twice as likely as continuing-generation students to be concerned about affording education (Soria et al., 2020b).

Student financial aid for postsecondary education comes in many different types — grants, work-study programs, loans, and scholarships. The type of aid first-generation students receive can have implications for whether they borrow to pay for their education and for their persistence. Furquim et al. (2017) found that first-generation college students borrowed more often and in greater amounts than non-first-generation college students. Ishitani (2016) found that the more types of financial aid first-generation college students received, the more likely they were to persist through higher education at 4-year institutions. Providing a greater percentage of financial aid as grants may also reduce the amount they have to borrow to pay for their education.

Raising Student Awareness About the Range of Services Offered by Academic Advising and Career Planning and Placement

Out-of-class experiences associated with learning and personal development are another dimension of the student postsecondary experience. Internships are one such experience that can be quite important for students: They can offer opportunities for students to connect what they learn in classes to real-world experiences, provide experience in the field, and build professional networks. And yet, participation in internships differs between first-generation and continuing-generation college students. In a 2019 survey by the National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE), first-generation college students were overrepresented among those who had never had an internship and underrepresented in paid internships (National Association of Colleges and Employers [NACE], 2020). Although there may be several factors that account for this difference, one may be that without having a parent who has attended college themselves, first-generation college students may have an added disadvantage — their parents may not be in a position to make internship or job connections for them (Havlik et al., 2020). Other reasons for this difference include access to internships, as first-generation students are more likely to attend open-enrollment institutions (RTI International, 2019), which are less likely

to offer institutional resources required to earn competitive paid internships, and economic factors, such as transportation costs to off-campus internships and the opportunity cost of giving up existing regular work to attend a limited-term internship (Hora et al., 2019).

Knowing about and making use of on-campus services, such as career centers, could potentially benefit first-generation students. One starting point may be to focus on academic advising in college. Unlike high school advising sessions, where students may have largely received information from their advisers, advising in college can be quite different. Advising in college is more than scheduling classes—advisers and students together can map out students' postdegree goals and identify experiences they would like to have during their student enrollment period, such as volunteering, studying abroad, or applying for research and internship experiences to prepare them for future careers. According to the CFGSS (n.d.-b), only 55% of first-generation students met with an academic adviser during their first year in college, compared with 72% of continuing-generation students. The CFGSS (n.d.-a) also found that among students who graduated, 24% of first-generation college graduates participated in career fairs, compared to 30% of continuing-generation college graduates, and that 28% of first-generation college graduates received résumé or cover letter assistance, compared to 34% of continuing-generation college graduates.

Raising student awareness and rates of accessing campus services may amplify already stressed college advisory staffs. The staff person to student ratios are already less than ideal, with many schools already providing few opportunities for advising. The Global Community for Academic Advising (NACADA) estimated that in 2011, the median ratio of students to academic advisers is 296:1, with 2-year institutions reporting a caseload of 441:1 (Robbins, 2013). NACE, in a recent survey of college and university career centers, reported an even higher ratio, with a median number of 1,735 students per professional staff member (NACE, 2021).

Degree Attainment

Students overall may be motivated by various factors to pursue higher education. Economic factors, such as being successful in a line of work, being an expert in a field of work, having lots of money, being able to find steady work, or financial security, as well as urging from friends, family, and teachers, have been found to be reasons first-generation students attend college (Saenz et al., 2007). Bui (2002) found that first-generation college students hope that earning a degree will enable them to help their families financially and grant them respect and status. First-generation students are also nearly twice as likely than continuing-generation students to be concerned about affording education (Soria et al., 2020b). All of these motivations and more are reflected in student postsecondary aspirations. As high school sophomores in 2002, students whose parents' education was high school or less expected to graduate from college or with a master's degree or above at a rate of just 33.1% and 25.4%, respectively (Ingels et al., 2005).[12] Redford and Hoyer (2017) found that students in this group who eventually went to college reported that they expected to earn a bachelor's degree or master's degree at 36% or 32%, respectively. This suggests that high school students with postsecondary aspirations, across all motivations, are more likely to make the transition to postsecondary education.

Yet, motivations and aspirations are not necessarily reflected in rates of degree attainment. First-generation students have lower rates of bachelor's degree completion (20%) than their non-first-generation peers (42%) but higher rates of associate's degree completion (13% vs. 8%). First-generation college students cite several reasons for dropping out, including lack of money (54%), preference for working and making money (46%), a change in family status (e.g., marriage, a baby, or a death in the family; 42%), and conflicts with demands at home (31%; Redford & Hoyer, 2017). Their persistence, resilience, and pride may be further weakened by lack of time and energy to devote to coursework due to juggling class with work and family obligations (Katrevich & Aruguete, 2017; Stebleton & Soria, 2012).

Employment and Earnings of Degree Holders

First-generation college job seekers may have different experiences as well as longer time horizons compared to their peers. Learning more about these possible differences could help students, postsecondary institutions, and employers calibrate accordingly.

Analyzing data from NACE's 2016 Student Survey, Eismann (2016) reported that slightly more than three-fourths of first-generation students applied for positions, with a success rate of 24.9%, with 43.1% of students receiving an offer and 57.8% accepting the offer. Non-first-generation students did substantially better: A significantly higher percentage

of students applied for a position (88.0%), with a success rate of 33.4%, 8.5% better; 49.0% received an offer, 5.9% better; and 68.2% accepted the offer, 10.4% better. Eismann also considered salary and found that expectations for starting salaries were similar between the two groups. First-generation students expected a median of $41,147, slightly less than their counterparts' median expectation of $42,839. However, there was a marked difference in the offers the two groups received: first-generation students received a median of $43,320 compared to non-first-generation students who received a significantly higher median offer of $49,245 (Eismann, 2016).

Despite marked differences directly after graduation, differences in employment experiences for first-generation students may not persist very long. While first-generation students enrolled in college at lower rates than their peers whose parents attended college, there were no statistically significant differences in full-time employment rates 4 years after degree attainment (2007–2008 bachelor's degree) between the groups (Cataldi et al., 2018). Median annual salaries were also not statistically different among the groups (DeBaun, 2018).

Recommendations for Advancing the Work on First-Generation Student Success

Our recommendations for the college promise community as well as the education community are presented in three areas: (a) research and data collection, (b) implications for practice, and (c) implications for policy. Note the interconnectedness of each of the proposed changes as well as the diversity and interrelatedness of the potential stakeholders for whom these recommendations are provided.

Research and Data Collection

Determine a Uniform and Consistent Definition of "First-Generation College Student"

The K–12 and postsecondary education communities need to reach consensus on a standard, formal definition of "first-generation college student." This standard definition should add clarity regarding which students are eligible for programs and services as well as increase comparability of data. Another potential benefit of this effort would be the ability to identify students who are first-generation college students but have not been previously identified.

Convene Local, State, and Federal Institutions to Review Current and Future Data Collection and Analyses for Their Inclusion of First-Generation College Students

There is an opportunity to work with school districts, state education agencies, and NCES to evaluate their current data collection and analyses for the possibility of including questions that would provide first-generation college status. It may be possible to supplement the data analyses with analyses that will contribute to developing policies and programs that will aid first-generation students.

Focus Research on First-Generation Subgroups

As a broad classification, first-generation within the U.S. higher education system encompasses a diverse array of subgroups of people of varied backgrounds and experiences. The dearth of research on first-generation subgroups (e.g., age, race/ethnicity, parent status) makes it difficult to develop and implement programs and services to address their needs. Future analyses should explore the distinctive impact on specific subgroups of first-generation students and focus on intersectionality—that is, the ways in which a student's first-generation status intersects with other aspects of the student's identity. Referred to as first-gen plus, these subgroups include individuals with overlapping identities, including LGBT, low income, White, African American, Latinx, Native American, undocumented, rural, female, and male (Karp et al., 2020).

Implications for Practice

Dedicate and Extend Paid Internship Programs That Are Combined With Course Credits, Beginning During Students' First Year of College

In December 2017, making a case for a dual student–apprentice education system, the New America Foundation's education policy program argued that apprenticeships have been "held back in the United States because [they] cannot deliver

the credentials—college degrees—required for career advancement" and urged policy makers to "connect apprenticeship to our higher education system, enabling people to be apprentices and college students at the same time" (McCarthy et al., 2017, p. 3). According to the report, "given the rising cost of college, apprenticeship—which pays wages from the first day of a program—offers an effective and equitable strategy for significantly expanding access to higher education" and "can help launch people directly into good jobs without the loan debt or long job searches that are weighing down so many graduates today" (p. 3).

Design Scholarships, Peer Mentoring Opportunities, and Support Programs to Increase the Percentage of First-Generation Students Accessing and Completing College Credentials, and Ensure That Advisers and Coaches Are Properly Trained

Direct student support activities, such as increased grant aid, peer mentoring, and college/career counseling, have been repeatedly linked to improvements in student enrollment, retention, and graduation (Stephens et al., 2012). However, implementation of these programs should be conducted in a systematic and carefully considered manner to prevent unintended consequences. The literature is rife with examples of well-intended programs acting to disenfranchise students the programs were intended to help (Stephens et al., 2012).

Studies have also shown that improving the quality of, and expanding access to, peer mentoring and trained advisory support at the postsecondary level has a direct impact on the academic and career success of first-generation students. Citing the annual Strada-Gallup Alumni Study, a 2019 *Inside Higher Ed* article, "Dear Faculty: You Matter More than You Know," noted that "a mentor who encouraged your goals and dreams" was found to be the single most important success factor in work and life for college graduates (Busteed, 2019, para. 2). The study found that "having such a mentor more than doubled a graduate's odds of being engaged in their work and thriving in their overall well-being" (Busteed, 2019, para. 2). For low-income and first-generation students, access to peer mentoring opportunities and trained advisory professionals could have a profound impact on educational and career outcomes.

Policy Recommendations

Stackable Credits for Working Students

According to a recent analysis by the Brookings Institution, stacked credentials[13] "has emerged as an increasingly popular higher education policy to support students who want to develop career skills but may not have the flexibility in their work and family schedules to commit to a longer-term program" (Meyer & Castleman, 2021, para. 3). Brookings found that at the time of publication, 17 states had allocated funding to colleges to develop stackable credential pathways, with 10 states requiring that their community college systems offer and advertise stacking options. Their research concluded that "stackable credentials improve employment and wages, particularly for students stacking in health or business" (Meyer & Castleman, 2021, para 10). With increased and dedicated funding, combined with coordinated outreach and communication, federal and state efforts could further assist first-generation students to return to community college for a second credential, while building on their skills to succeed along a career path better aligned with current labor market demands.

Provide Family Care Supports and Financial Assistance for Other Critical Nontuition Costs of College

First-generation students who rely on grants and loans also often carry the additional burden of financially supporting parents, siblings, and/or children (Standlee, 2019). Institutional, state, and municipal leaders should provide on-campus work opportunities, food pantries, free toiletries, bookstore credit accounts, career clothing banks for interviews, and free training for job searches and interviews.

Closing Thoughts

Direct and consistent coordination and collaboration among employers and higher education institutions are necessary to better determine and address both the expectations of first-generation job seekers and the desired skill sets of local economies and labor markets. Innovative solutions, such as stackable credits, which are already being considered by practitioners and policy makers, point to transformational change on the horizon.

Still, hard-won improvements in first-generation student experiences and outcomes remain tenuous. COVID-19's disproportionate impact on the college and career success of first-generation students cannot be overstated. The barriers we examined—preparation for college, navigating higher education, financing a college education, accessing employment after college—have been exacerbated by the follow-on effects of the coronavirus outbreak. Without concerted and continued efforts by government, institutional, and social actors to bridge the gap between first-generation and continuing-generation students, first-generation students are likely to remain marginalized.

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5. College Promise for Youth in or Aged Out of Foster Care

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College has long been seen as a gateway to economic advancement. Research has consistently shown the increase in economic mobility gained through postsecondary education. In 1979, there was a 40% income difference between a person holding a bachelor's degree and a person with only a high school diploma. By 2005, the gap had widened to 75% (Harbour & Smith, 2016). As with other populations, the benefits of college completion are clear for youth in or aged out of foster care (hereinafter referred to as foster youth). Foster youth who complete a college education report higher employment rates and higher annual earnings than those who do not complete college (Okpych & Courtney, 2014).

Although more than 80% of foster youth report a desire to enroll in college, only some 20% actually enroll (Day et al., 2011). According to the NWGFCE (2018), between 3% and 10.8% of foster care alumni (FCA) who attend college will complete their bachelor's program.[14] Studies have found that financial difficulties, a need to earn money, and housing concerns are among the barriers that prevent foster youth from pursuing postsecondary education (Day et al., 2012; Salazar, 2012). Foster youth also face significant challenges when pursuing a college degree, such as difficulties in navigating the college application process, unpreparedness for independent living, lack of supportive adults, insufficient financial resources, mental health issues, and inadequate emotional support to cope with the academic demands and social stresses related to college life (Batsche et al., 2014; Courtney et al., 2004; Day et al., 2011; Day et al., 2012; Day et al., 2013; Gillum et al., 2016; Jackson et al., 2019; Merdinger et al., 2005; Rios & Rocco, 2014; Salazar, 2012).

When considering the challenges experienced by foster youth who are pursuing college, one has also to acknowledge the potential role of trauma in their lives as children. Adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) can impact the trajectory of one's life physically, mentally, socially, economically, and educationally. According to Alvarez (2018), "51% of the children in the child welfare system who have taken the ACE questionnaire have had four or more ACEs, while outside of foster care, only 13% of children had the same" (p. 2). Therefore, programs serving foster youth should be intentional about addressing the role of trauma in college access and retention efforts.

A stable and supportive education or training program can have tremendous positive effects on foster youth pursuing a path to self-sufficiency. In a three-group comparison study of students in a TRIO program[15] who did not have foster care experience, students who were in foster care and a campus-based support program, and students who were in foster care who did not participate in a campus support program, students in foster care who were not engaged in a campus-based support program were significantly less likely to stay in college than nonfoster TRIO students and foster care peers enrolled in a campus support program (Day & Jackson, 2021). The foster youth who did not participate in Transition to Independence (TIP) were almost 2 times more likely to drop out of college than the foster youth who were enrolled in the TIP program (Day & Jackson, 2021). There were no statistically significant differences in dropout rates based on age of enrollment, transfer status, race, or gender. This study shows that targeted support programs can level the playing field for foster youth and their nonfoster, low-income peers (Day & Jackson, 2021).

Ordinarily, parents and family provide critical support and guidance to a young person pursuing a college education. But this is not the case for many young adults in or aged out of foster care, who will have to balance the demands of life with the demands of applying to and moving through a degree program. Unlike their peers, foster youth often do not have mentors or individuals to help them navigate the process or a grasp of finding and using the resources for which they are eligible (U.S. Government Accountability Office [GAO], 2016).

The U.S. Department of Education launched a call to action to increase the college degree and skills certificate attainment rate by 50% through what is commonly referred to as the America's College Promise Initiative, which helps to increase postsecondary degree and certificate completion to support broad, national economic growth (Harbour & Smith, 2016). Support services like those provided by college promise can serve as mechanisms to increase the likelihood of positive outcomes and support degree completion among foster youth. Beyond support services and financial support, college promise programs engage key stakeholders on the importance of postsecondary education, and they send a

clear message that college is attainable for every eligible student (College Promise, 2020). While much of the focus of America's College Promise Initiative has been on removing financial barriers, research has shown that the removal of financial barriers alone—that is, making college free—does not ultimately increase overall degree attainment, especially for underserved and underresourced students (Eden, 2016). Thus, for students who are currently in foster care, making college free may not increase historically low completion rates, an argument further supported by the apparent ineffectiveness of the current amount of financial support for which foster youth are eligible at both federal and state levels to attend higher education. A more holistic approach to student support will be required to move the college success needle for youth in foster care.

A college promise program for this specific population could prove significant. Federal policy shifts and local state efforts have advanced over the years, but there is more to be done to ensure degree completion for these youth. This chapter reviews promising college access and retention programs for foster youth, discusses key policies that affect college access and retention, and highlights the essential features of a College Promise Model for youth in the foster care system.

Promising Programs

As more attention is devoted to the postsecondary education needs of foster youth, it is important to note the promising program models and structures that have been created specifically to provide postsecondary access and retention for this group of students. Notably, precollege programs and campus support programs have been used to attempt to mitigate the wide gaps in college enrollment and retention among foster youth.

Precollege outreach programs can improve college access for underrepresented students (Gándara & Bial, 2001; Vargas, 2004). However, the literature on precollege programs specifically for foster youth is scant. Although they vary in scope, the following programs, found in the literature, were designed specifically for foster youth and warrant further exploration: Fostering Academics, Mentoring Excellence (FAME); Better Futures; Fostering Higher Education; the National Social Work Enrichment Program (NSEP); and First Star.

The FAME 3-day residential summer camp program began in 2008 at Michigan State University. It provides social, personal, and informational support within a learning-campus environment to promote resilience and prepare youth for the transition from high school to college (Day et al., 2018). Day et al. (2018) studied 142 high school–aged foster youths who participated in FAME from 2008 through 2012. Eighty-six (45%) enrolled in a postsecondary education program.

One of the most rigorous studies of a precollege program was the Better Futures Project. The Better Futures Project developed and tested a model to empower and support youth in foster care who suffered with serious mental health challenges, and it helped prepare them for college (Geenen et al., 2015; Phillips et al., 2015). The study examined high school completion, postsecondary participation, self-determination, mental health, quality of life, hope, and postsecondary and transition planning outcomes. The intervention group of youth participated in three activities over a 10-month period: a 4-day, 3-night summer institute on a university campus; individual, bimonthly peer coaching; and four mentoring workshops. Study results showed that youth who participated in Better Futures achieved twice the level of postsecondary participation compared with a control group. Better Futures participants also appeared to have higher rates of high school completion and mental health recovery and a better quality of life (Geenen et al., 2015; Phillips et al., 2015).

Fostering Higher Education Intervention (FHE) is a postsecondary access and retention intervention based on the social development model and self-determination theory (Salazar et al., 2016). FHE has three primary intervention elements: educational advocacy, substance abuse prevention programming, and mentoring. It comprises three primary intervention components: the Higher Education Goal Planning and Action procedure, the Top 6 Potential Pitfalls for Higher Education curriculum, and mentoring (Salazar et al., 2016). According to study findings, participants found the activities interesting and useful, gave positive feedback for the higher education planning activity, had positive reactions to the Pitfalls curriculum areas, and believed the mentoring intake activity was important.

One of the few extended precollege programs, the NSEP, partners with the Alabama Department of Human Resources to provide high school juniors, seniors, and recent graduates a 6-week summer camp experience on a college campus. The program has four primary components: college readiness, employment, leadership, and healthy relationships (Jackson et al., 2020). Because research suggests that some students are motivated to pursue a career in social work as a result of their own personal experiences, the youth are also introduced to social work as a potential college major and career choice (Thomas, 2016). Partnerships with university stakeholders (admissions, financial aid, housing, student

affairs, disability services, recreation, etc.) and community stakeholders (social service agencies, Toastmasters, health department, etc.) are critical features of the program. As with many programs, more evaluation of its efficacy is needed. For instance, NSEP is conducting a qualitative study of its program, the findings of which will be published in the literature.

Another notable precollege program is First Star, which partners with universities and child welfare agencies throughout the country to offer long-term college readiness programs for high school foster youth aged 13–19 years. It operates on 14 college campuses. The program includes four immersive residential summer experiences on a university campus and monthly sessions during the school year. First Star Academies keep youth on track for high school graduation and prepare them for higher education and adulthood by providing specialized programming that addresses academics, life skills, and caregiver and mentor engagement. Of the First Star Academy scholars, 98% have graduated high school, and 89% have enrolled in higher education, including a significant portion at 4-year universities (First Star Inc., 2020). First Star also offers an alumni program for academy graduates to provide continuous support for youth during college.

In addition to precollege programs, researchers have examined the role of campus support programs for youth making the transition out of foster care into college. Notably, Dworsky and Perez (2010) completed an early examination of 10 college support programs in California and Washington. They found that the campus programs were diverse, and they suggested an impact evaluation to examine whether these programs are leading to higher college retention and graduation rates. Kinarsky (2017) studied youth participating in the Guardian Scholars Program in California, and Unrau et al. (2017) evaluated the core components of one college support program at a midwestern university from the perspective of student users who had aged out of foster care. The studies found similar results. Although the needs of program participants are similar, the strategies used for program development, funding, and implementation vary by site, and each study asserts the need for more research on campus-based programs. Geiger et al. (2018) built on previous work that called for the need to develop programs to support foster youth in college. They surveyed program directors and staff regarding their perceptions of challenges related to programs that support foster youth in college and the challenges that students experience. Their findings were similar to those of other research in that the programs surveyed provided a wide range of services based on funding, resources on campus, location, and policies.

In addition to college access (precollege) and college retention (campus-based) programs, some states have launched statewide initiatives to provide leadership on practices and to communicate information about their programs, including how to develop them, and on youth access to aid and other resources. Fostering Success Michigan, California Pathways to Success, Washington's Passport to College, Florida's Positive Pathways, and the REACH[16] programs of Alabama, Georgia, Ohio, and Texas are among the statewide initiatives discussed in the literature or have programs that maintain an active online presence.

Two national coordinating groups—Fostering Academic Achievement Nationwide (FAAN) and National Research Consortium on Foster Alumni in Higher Education (NRC-FAHE)—have formed to support campus program development, implementation, and sustainability. Practitioners and leaders are supported through FAAN, and campus-based researchers are supported through the NRC-FAHE. Specifically, FAAN brings together state representatives, often from college campuses or state agencies, to share best practices on foster care and higher education policy and practice. The NRC-FAHE is a network of researchers whose aims are to improve practice and to influence policy related to youth in and out of foster care and higher education. The network creates and advances a clear research agenda and facilitates communication and collaboration among interdisciplinary scholars to promote postsecondary access and retention of youth in care and FCA. The NRC-FAHE has successfully used research to identify best practices to inform and influence policy making that is practice informed and that centers the voice of foster youth in care and alumni in improving college access and retention (National Research Consortium on Foster Alumni in Higher Education, 2019).

In addition to education initiatives from the higher education community, child welfare agencies support the postsecondary needs of youth in foster care. One notable initiative is the Annie E. Casey Foundation's Learn and Earn to Achieve Potential (LEAP) program, launched in 2015 by the Casey Foundation and the Corporation for National and Community Service. This multisite initiative "aims to help youth and young adults ages 14–25 who have been involved in public systems or experienced homelessness succeed in school and at work by building and expanding education and employment pathways" (Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2021, p. 1). The initiative uses two pathway models to meet participant needs:

Jobs for America's Graduates and Jobs for the Future's Back on Track. In a recent evaluation of the initiative, researchers offered several insights:

> (1) positive relationships with staff are critical to keeping youth engaged in services; (2) partnerships with child welfare, juvenile justice, and other agencies are essential for expanding access, aligning resources and recruiting and connecting eligible young people with the services, relationships, and resources they need to succeed; (3) one-on-one learning opportunities, flexible scheduling, options to pause participation, and other customized support can help keep young people engaged in services when they face unexpected challenges; and (4) instead of making assumptions, it is important to let young people inform the program and identify service changes they need. (Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2021, p. 5)

The development of precollege and campus support programs discussed here is encouraging. Still, there is little evidence regarding what approaches are most effective at improving postsecondary access and success for these youth (Geiger & Beltran, 2017; Salazar et al., 2016). More research needs to be done on each approach and its outcomes. As this research proceeds, federal and state policies that support college access and retention of foster youth remain vital.

Key Federal and State Policies

Federal policies have attempted to increase access to college among foster youth. The CFCIP, created as part of the 1999 Foster Care Independence Act, was amended in 2001 to include the Education and Training Voucher (ETV) program, the first federal program created specifically to address the postsecondary educational needs of this population. States can use ETV funds to provide foster youth with up to $5,000 per year for postsecondary training and education. Youth receiving ETV funds on their 21st birthday remain eligible until age 23 years if they are making satisfactory progress toward the completion of their degree or certificate program requirements (i.e., a cumulative GPA of 2.0 or higher and maintaining at least part-time enrollment status; Center for the Study of Social Policy, 2009; Okpych, 2012).

The Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act of 2008 has expanded eligibility for the ETV program to youth who are at least 16 years old when they achieve permanency through adoption or subsidized guardianship (Center for the Study of Social Policy, 2009). The College Cost Reduction Act of 2009 also allows financial aid applicants who were in foster care when they were at least 13 years old to claim independent status (Fernandes-Alcantara, 2019), even if they subsequently achieved permanency through adoption or legal guardianship. This means that the income of their adoptive parent(s) or legal guardian(s) is not counted against them when determining their eligibility for federal financial aid. Finally, the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2021 temporarily expanded the ETV program by an additional $50 million and eliminated state match requirements for the period of April 2020 through September 2022. This additional allocation increased the maximum benefit award from $5,000 to $12,000 and extended the eligibility criteria for the award from age 26 to age 27 years (Children's Bureau, 2021).

In addition to these federal efforts, state governments have sought to expand access to higher education among foster youth. Twenty-two states have implemented tuition-waiver programs that allow youth to attend 2- and 4-year colleges at no, or significantly reduced, cost (Hernandez et al., 2017). More than 3,000 youths were supported through tuition waivers in 2015, totaling more than $8 million (Hernandez et al., 2017). However, this study documented a range of eligibility requirements (e.g., age and time restrictions) that limit the use of tuition waivers. For example, many of the programs limit eligibility to youth who exited foster care on or after their 18th birthdays, some states require youth to have been in care over a certain amount of time (generally between 6 months and 2 years minimum), and some require that youth be under age 21 years at the time of application. Time limits also restrict the use of tuition and fee waiver programs, with some states requiring waivers to be used in consecutive years of study (Hernandez et al., 2017). Given that many of these tuition-waiver measures have only recently been implemented, it is not yet clear what their impact will be on college access and graduation. As an alternative to waivers, some states offer special scholarships and grants that target youth (Eilertson, 2002; Spigel, 2004). In all, these state efforts are important, given the positive impact that exempting college students from tuition expenses has been shown to have (Nora et al., 2005).

Pell Grants: Strengths and Gaps Affecting Foster Youth

The federal Pell Grant program is the largest means-tested financial aid resource available to undergraduate students in the United States (Bettinger, 2004). A major benefit of Pell Grants is that, unlike student loans, they are not intended to be repaid. Although eligibility is determined by financial need, how much a student can receive depends on a number of factors, including the cost of attendance, estimated family contribution, and whether the student is enrolled in school full- or part-time. The maximum federal Pell Grant is $6,495 for the 2021–2022 award year for a student enrolled full-time (Federal Student Aid, 2021). The lifetime limit of Pell Grant funding that a student may receive is the equivalent of 12 full-time semesters, or 6 academic years. Students who are enrolled part-time are eligible for funding, but they may receive less money each academic year because they are enrolled for fewer credit hours. For example, if a student, based on financial need, is eligible to receive $5,000 in Pell Grant funding per academic year but only attends school part-time, the student would receive only $2,500 for that year. Importantly, stopping out[17] will not count against the Pell Grant timetable. Students who stop out can resume their Pell Grant funding once they reenroll in school, provided they have not reached their lifetime limit (Federal Student Aid, 2021).

Considering the eligibility criteria for Pell Grants, virtually all foster youth are eligible for at least some level of Pell Grant assistance. The provision that stopping out will not count against the Pell Grant timetable will help foster youth who fluctuate between stopping out and part-time enrollment. Foster youth are nearly twice as likely to stop out (43%) compared with their nonfoster, low-income, first-generation peers (27%; Day et al., 2021). However, the recent time limits restricting Pell Grant awards to 12 semesters (Federal Student Aid, 2021) may affect the ability of foster youth to rely on Pell Grant assistance through the completion of their degrees. A recent study by Day et al. (2021) found that foster youth graduate at a slower pace (with a mean time of 13.5 semesters) than their low-income, first-generation peers (11 semesters). While Pell Grants may have a positive effect on student retention, the loss of that financial assistance resource may discourage students from continuing to pursue a postsecondary education credential (Bettinger, 2004).

In addition to these federal and state initiatives, additional funding streams can be braided to strengthen the financial-support infrastructure to increase college-going behavior of foster youth. Braiding existing funding is enhanced when institutions of higher education collaborate with child welfare and other community-based organizations. Programs, such as those that promote independent living, can provide access to housing and other public benefits while colleges provide academic support, health care, and food services. One example of how this has been implemented at a state level is in Michigan, which since 2012 has used state Chaffee dollars to fund independent-living coordinators on college campuses. Mental and physical health support on college campuses could be enhanced by using Medicaid for service reimbursement. The Affordable Care Act (ACA) allows foster care youth to access Medicaid through age 26 years; however, this form of insurance has not been widely accepted in campus-based health clinics and campus counseling centers. The extension of the ACA is meaningless where on-campus health centers do not accept Medicaid.

The next section of this chapter discusses a proposed college promise model for foster youth.

College Promise for Foster Youth

College promise programs were first initiated in 2015 as a national effort to lower student debt by making the first 2 years of college free (College Promise, 2020). As of November 2016, 23 states had already enacted legislation to support free community colleges (Pingel et al., 2016). In 2020, the number of college promise programs increased to 360, including 30 statewide college promise programs (College Promise, 2020). College promise programs have been implemented in various stages through a variety of different models. Implementation ranges from covering the cost of tuition or enrollment fees to covering the entire cost of attendance, which includes tuition, books, transportation, and other costs related to attending college. According to the national College Promise organization, the key components of a college promise program include (a) guaranteed financial support covering the cost of attendance, (b) connection to a place (i.e., city, state, region, higher education institution), (c) a performance-based structure that does not require burdensome eligibility requirements (such as a minimum GPA) for students to access, (d) financial sustainability, (e) cross-sector leadership and collaboration, and (f) a structure that is evidence based.

For colleges seeking only to increase access, waiving tuition or fees may be the solution. For colleges seeking to increase both access and completion rates, the solution may be programs that add student supports, such as counseling and career exploration and development, in addition to financial support. For FCA seeking to enter and complete a higher education

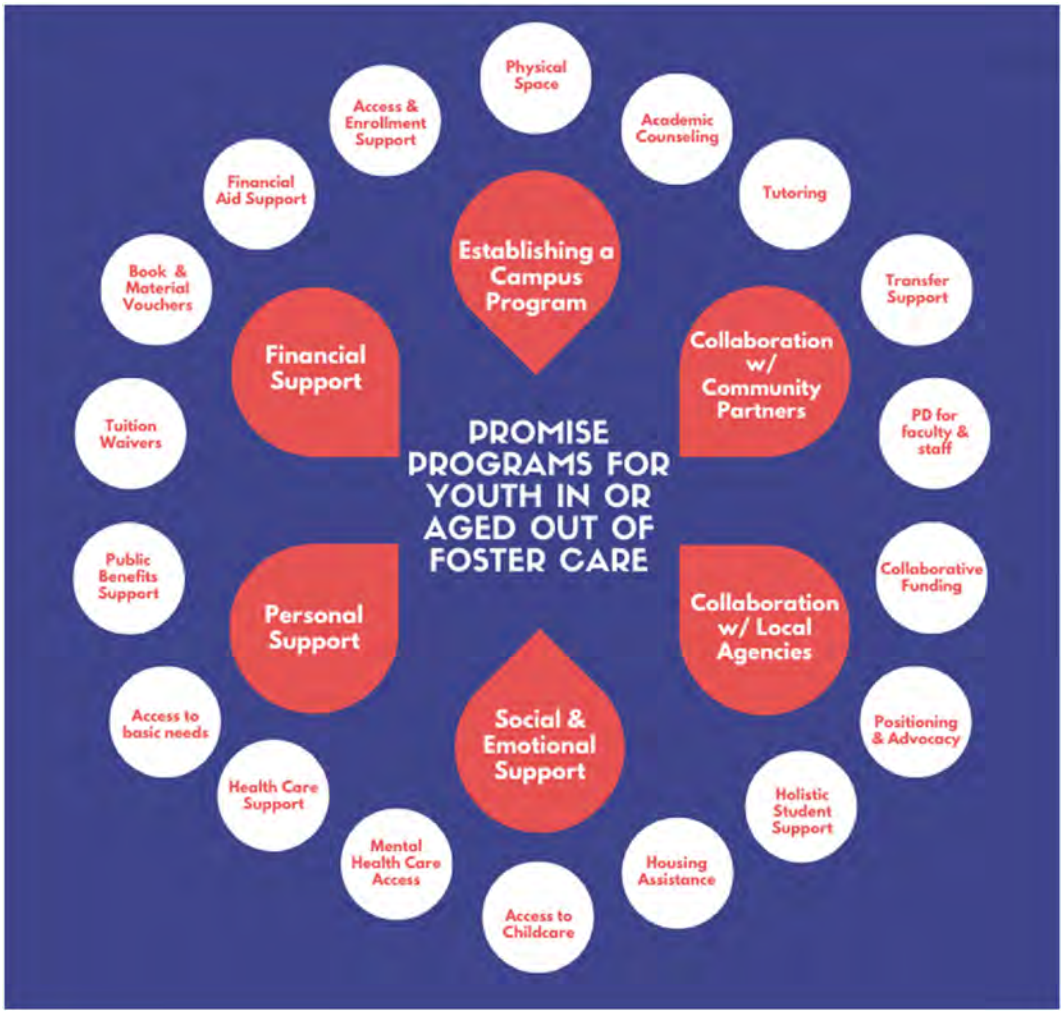

Figure 5.1 Components of promise programs for youth who are in or have aged out of foster care.

program, promise programs with holistic supports beyond financial support are essential. Having supportive individuals on campus to whom students can turn provides what St. John (2012) referred to as "college knowledge," which is the ability to use resources, both human agents and general accessible information, to navigate the education system. Additionally, Piel and Lacasse (2017) asserted that while foster youth may depend on campus advocates to help them navigate the institution, they should also have the opportunity to feel empowered and have a voice in the decision-making process as it comes to their experience. Both the opportunity to build navigational capital and the need for a safe space to build advocacy skills are vital to the success of foster youth within higher education.

While many of the supports mentioned thus far are beneficial for FCA, these supports could also benefit the larger student body population, especially as FCA are representative of larger student populations as a whole and are not identifiable by only their status as a foster care alumnus. Indeed, their intersectionalities span race, gender, parental status, disability status, veteran status, and previous incarceration, among other categories. Similar to the general student population, these intersectionalities come with their own challenges. For example, an African American foster care alum who is also a parent may have different challenges or experiences than a White foster care alum who is also a veteran. Given these overlaps, the supports discussed in this chapter can benefit all FCA (see Figure 5.1).

Access and Enrollment Support

Through intentional outreach to high schools, child welfare agencies, and foster care guardians, higher education institutions can support collegiate navigation for students and their support systems. Having summer bridge programs that

introduce FCA to college campuses, academic supports, and what to expect in classes in different academic majors can lessen the impostor syndrome that first-generation college students often feel. Peer mentors can help first-generation students with the application process, whose complexities can be obstacles to access in the first instance. These mentors can ease the transition to college. Through intentional outreach and summer bridge programs, colleges can also provide the technological support needed to apply for college, apply for financial aid, register for classes, and more, as not all students have access to computers or technology from their placements. Finally, to really help introduce FCA to higher education, working intentionally with high school counselors to ensure that FCA have priority access to early-college experiences, such as concurrent or dual enrollment, can also significantly improve the college-going rates among FCA.

Physical Space

Hass et al. (2014) suggested that on-campus safe havens contribute to students' self-efficacy in higher education. These safe spaces can take the form of opportunities to develop relationships with supportive faculty and staff as well as physical spaces to which to turn for assistance, such as academic tutoring or counseling (Kinarsky, 2017). Students may express feelings of embarrassment in being identified as foster youth within the larger campus community (Sanchez, 2004), so services based on or delivered to or through traditional settings open to the general population of students or the public may be an effective way to engage youth. However, having a space where foster youth can gather on campus provides a sense of safety, welcoming, and belonging.

Dedicated Academic Advising

In addition to physical space, FCA can benefit from advisers or academic counselors who, either through training or their own personal experiences, specialize in helping these students navigate course options, select an academic major, engage with career development, and utilize all academic supports in the institution. This approach can help students develop strong relationships with campus advocates without frequently having to retell their stories or disclose their status as a foster care alum, which can be stigmatizing.

Academic Support

Foster youth often have unique experiences in education that differ greatly from traditional students' experiences. Owing to sometimes abrupt school changes, children in foster care can experience disruptions in their education. One example is that lost or misplaced school records can increase delays to academic enrollment (Pecora, 2012). Without effective advocates to ensure that students in foster care are being placed in comparable courses as they switch schools, foster care students can end up repeating grades, being placed in special education courses, or being placed in courses that do not challenge them intellectually and academically (Pecora, 2012). This delay in access and underplacement in courses in the elementary and secondary systems can have a direct correlation to foster students' access to college-level coursework when entering higher education. Dedicated academic supports, tutoring, supplemental instruction, flexible course schedules, and accessible course materials—all can help students succeed academically.

Transfer Support

For foster youth at community colleges, support in transferring to a 4-year institution is immensely important. This dedicated support can focus on connecting students to foster youth support programs at their transfer institutions, ensuring the completion of any pretransfer requirements (i.e., housing applications, confirming articulated courses, completing assessments), and updating financial aid information to reflect the intent to transfer.

Financial Support

While foster youth might receive financial benefits for school, the amounts vary by state, county, and even agency. Some foster youth receive only the Pell and Chafee Grants, which often cover the cost of tuition and some fees. But depending on where the student lives (e.g., California, with its high cost of living, vs. Ohio, with a much lower cost of living), those

grants go only so far. Policy makers have an opportunity to increase the amount of guaranteed student funding based on a minimum threshold that takes cost of living into consideration.

Nor is tuition the only financial support that students need. Additional funding for books and course materials, transportation, housing, and, for some students, childcare are all potential financial barriers that may not be covered through programs that provide tuition only. Flexible funding streams provide support to the full range of a student's financial needs and are vital to supporting foster youth.

Training for Faculty, Staff, and Practitioners

As important as technical transformations are, it is imperative that those who work in and lead institutions of higher education develop the skills and knowledge required to effectively support these students by providing trauma-informed and healing-centered professional development.

Trauma-informed care has five grounding principles: safety, choice, collaboration, trustworthiness, and empowerment. These five principles form a framework for educators to reduce the likelihood of retraumatizing students. Dworsky and Perez (2010) suggested that educators who work with foster youth "need to understand and be prepared to address the unique challenges encountered by foster youth" (p. 25). Ridgard et al. (2015) suggested that providing trauma-informed care to school employees can help change institutional culture as well as policies and procedures that traditionally govern the school. When all employees have such training, they will be able to recognize signs of trauma, respond appropriately, and engage without retraumatizing the student.

Another set of tools entails healing-centered care. One critique of trauma-informed care is that it can encourage an educator to focus on the student's deficits and adopt the role of a savior seeking to "fix" a student's trauma rather than empowering the student. Healing-centered care is grounded in self-affirmation and empowerment of individuals and communities (Ginwright, 2018). A study by Tobolowsky et al. (2019) found that even child-protective workers, many of whom are trained in trauma-informed practices, can sometimes view foster youth negatively or from a deficit perspective, simply because they are in the foster care system. Healing-centered care shifts the focus from the trauma of the past to the current strengths of the individual and how individuals can be agents of change within their communities. Culture is a large part of healing-centered practices, as it can ground individuals with a sense of purpose, self-perception, and meaning, all of which trauma can strip away. Healing is a communal practice that is shaped in communities with shared identities. With this in mind, it could benefit individuals on student support/success teams, especially those who work with foster youth, to undergo healing-centered care training in addition to trauma-informed care training.

Focus on Personal, Social, and Emotional Support

Basic-Needs Support (Food, Health Care, Childcare, Etc.)

While the financial aid that students receive from their institutions can help cover some food costs, the reality is that students often receive a disbursement of that financial aid refund at the beginning of each term. Without the skills to save and stretch the limited funds so that they last the entire semester, foster youth are forced to rely on their campus support programs to assist with accessing food. The Wisconsin Hope Lab reported that 55% of foster youth have the greatest level of food insecurity on community college campuses (Goldrick-Rab et al., 2017). Kinarsky (2017) found that foster youth often relied on their Guardian Scholars Program staff to support them in accessing food resources on campus. Additionally, one fifth of foster youth in Kinarsky's study described challenges with managing finances needed to maintain food and housing security. Campus programs dedicated to financial management and basic-needs support should collaborate with campus food services to provide meals to students while on campus. There is also an opportunity to provide grocery support for students when they are away from campus through the development of a campus food pantry or agreement with local food agencies to bring food to the campus program's office so that students can take food they need through a "grab and go" process.

Health Care Support

Foster youth have traditionally had higher medical and mental health challenges than their non-foster youth peers. The 2006 Northwest Study by Pecora et al. (2006) showed that only 47% of FCA had health insurance upon their exit from

foster care. Passage of the federal ACA of 2010 allowed all individuals aging out of foster care to be eligible for Medicaid coverage until age 26 years. However, students still need to go through the hurdles in applying for Medicaid, including providing documentary proof of previous foster care status, to receive the benefit. Even when foster youth do receive Medicaid, historically slow payment rates have discouraged many campus health centers from accepting Medicaid, and in fact they are not required to do so (Council on Foster Care Adoption and Kinship Care & Committee on Early Childhood, 2012). Therefore there is a great opportunity to support access to quality health care for foster youth, especially for campuses that have health care programs, health clinics, and medical schools.

For colleges and universities with health care programs open to the public, health clinics open to students, or medical schools at which students can receive services, it is important to think about how students might be able to access such services. Do students need to pay a health fee to receive on-campus services? Do the on-campus health services require specific insurance? If so, do they accept Medicaid? Do students have a limited number of times that they can access the campus health services? Are there restrictions to accessing health care if the student has a history of substance abuse? It is important that campus administrators remove such barriers to access campus health care services.

Mental Health Support

Stress and ACEs may make foster youth vulnerable to developing mental illnesses. In his review of studies of the mental health of foster youth, Pecora et al. (2009) reported that 63% of foster youth in the Casey Field Office Mental Health Study had at least one lifetime mental health diagnosis. Data from the National Survey of Child and Adolescent Well Being suggested that nearly half of youth involved in child welfare have clinically significant emotional or behavioral issues (Burns et al., 2004), and older foster youth are 2–3 times more likely than peers of the same age to be prescribed psychotropic medications (Leslie et al., 2011).

Research has shown that mental health problems have a profound impact on all aspects of campus life, affecting students' physical, emotional, cognitive, and interpersonal functioning (Jackson et al., 2019). The American College Health Association (2018) recently reported that approximately 40% of undergraduates have reported feeling depressed, and 10% have seriously considered suicide. And that was pre-COVID-19, which has produced significantly greater stresses and feelings of isolation. Thus foster youth, who may already be predisposed to mental illness surrounding the trauma associated with their entrance into the foster care system, need additional support and access to mental health support on campus. Traditionally, campus foster youth liaisons must negotiate on behalf of each youth for access to a greater number of appointments than an average student may need or have available. However, campus administrators can update their policies so that any foster youth can automatically gain free, unlimited access to mental health professionals. This would help support continuity in care and the ability to establish and maintain trusted relationships between practitioners and students, and it would relieve students of the financial burden of mental health care. For foster youth who currently take medication for a diagnosed mental illness, access to a psychiatrist on campus would also support consistent and accessible medication management.

Housing Support

Housing has always been a major area of concern for foster youth. Though there have been recent updates to legislation to lengthen the time in which foster youth can stay in care, the ability to do so typically depends on the assent of the guardian or ward. The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated the need for campuses to provide stable housing support for foster youth, especially given that at the outset of the pandemic, many residential colleges closed and sent their students home. These abrupt, middle-of-term residential housing closures imposed enormous burdens on foster youth and other students who may not have had a safe home to which to return and instead had to petition to remain on campus, where allowed. Residential colleges can provide guaranteed, year-round housing for foster youth in order to provide safe and stable housing throughout and beyond the academic year.

For nonresidential colleges, such as community colleges, there are opportunities to support foster youth with housing support from state funding geared toward homeless student services, or partnerships can be developed with housing programs like Home Stay, which traditionally offers services solely to international students. Many counties operate housing support for foster youth who are working and/or attending school. Partnering with county agencies to ensure placement

for foster youth who are college students can help meet housing needs. Ultimately, using braided funding to develop or build housing for foster youth will be vital in supporting students with stable, safe, and affordable housing support.

Childcare

Reichlin Cruse et al. (2020b) estimated that approximately 33% of community college students have dependents, and more than 20% of all undergraduate students have dependent children. Teen pregnancy is more common among foster youth. In their analysis of data of both foster and nonfoster youth aged 17–19 years, Dworsky and Courtney (2010) found that young women aging out of foster care were more likely to have been pregnant at least once by age 17 or 18 years (33%) when compared with women who are not FCA (14%). Because most foster youth begin their college careers at a community college, it is reasonable to assume that many of the foster youth with children might attend a community college. Community colleges in particular can provide additional support to foster youth who are parents by reserving spots in their campus childcare programs. Increasing the number of hours that a campus childcare program is open provides additional flexibility for student parents who may need to take classes in the evening or on the weekend. For campuses that do not have an on-campus childcare program, working closely with a local childcare service or agency to provide childcare support while students are in class, at minimum, will also help relieve the burden of balancing childcare and course attendance. Finally, campuses can remove any policies or restrictions that prohibit bringing children on campus. Such practices create a barrier for student parents in their ability to attend classes due to a change in childcare availability, and this in turn penalizes student parents for attempting to be both a student and a parent.

Collaboration With Local Community Partners and Agencies

Holistic Student Support

Many campuses across the country are undergoing redesigns to foster student completion. One such effort uses a Guided Pathways framework, which clarifies the path to completion from the first day of college through graduation by listing all necessary courses, incorporating experiential learning, and connecting students to postcollege life. For institutions developing student support/success teams for foster youth, it may be beneficial to include members of the community or county with expertise in supporting special populations. Whitman (2018) and Cooper et al. (2008) suggested that students could benefit from partnerships between campus-based programs and off-campus services, such as mental health or county services, as a holistic approach to student services. Through a memorandum of understanding, a social worker through child welfare agencies or a representative who works with foster youth could participate as a member of the support/success team to provide streamlined support for foster youth within the institution. Organizations that operate programs like the LEAP initiative, such as the Anne E. Casey Foundation, could partner with campuses to provide direct support to foster youth to supplement needed support that campuses may not have the resources to offer.

Batsche et al. (2014) made such a recommendation, suggesting that case managers be trained on community college resources and that community college personnel be trained on the foster care system to enhance the college knowledge of all parties involved. Collaboration with college advisers, counselors, program staff, and child welfare employees could greatly support the continuity of care for foster youth within higher education. Though federal laws such as FERPA may prevent higher education institutions from sharing valuable data, there are opportunities to develop memoranda of understanding to ensure that privacy strictures are followed to protect students' data while also supporting students' needs.

Many of the recommendations here would entail changes in institutional policy (e.g., increasing the number of appointments a foster care alum might make at the campus health center), and many would also come at a cost. Updates to campus policy and practice, and therefore expenditures, often result in the most vulnerable populations competing for the same small allocation of flexible dollars. Therefore additional sources of flexible revenue, or unrestricted funds, will be necessary for campuses to implement significant and sustainable changes within the institution to better serve foster youth. Working with public officials, foundations, and local businesses to raise and sustain funding to support foster youth within higher education will be vital to student success.

Discussion and Conclusion

Because college attainment predicts increased employment and earnings in the general population, the benefits can be even greater for foster youth (Okpych & Courtney, 2014). If college completion (not just attendance) is an earnest goal that policy makers seek to address, more attention needs to be paid to addressing the unique barriers foster youth face in the pursuit of higher educational attainment (Day et al., 2011; Day et al., 2013; Geiger & Beltran, 2017; Piel, 2018; Rios & Rocco, 2014). Courtney et al. (2009) reported that, among foster youth in the Midwest study, by age 23–24 years, about 33% had 1 or more years of college, and 6% of FCA who enrolled in college had earned a college degree, compared to 33% of the general population (approximately one-sixth the rate). Out of the 20,445 foster youths in 2019 (Children's Bureau, 2020), roughly only one-third (6,746) are pursuing a degree, and only 1,226 (6%) will likely complete that degree within 6 years. That leaves many foster youth still pursuing a degree or certificate without access to Pell Grant funding after the 6-year (12-semester) lifetime limit. The decision by Congress to limit Pell Grant funding in 2011 to 12 semesters of postsecondary enrollment (Federal Student Aid, 2021) is of grave concern for college-enrolled foster youth.

The decision to stop out because one has experienced a difficult semester or because of the need to work to earn money places vulnerable students in danger of losing critical financial aid supports (i.e., ETV, Pell Grants). Previous studies have pointed to financial difficulties and the subsequent need to work as a major factor for making the decision to stop out (Ishitani, 2006). Whereas reliable, sufficient federal and state support could promote college persistence and continued receipt of performance-based funding, insufficient support could set in motion a process that makes college persistence and academic achievement extremely difficult (Okpych, 2012). There is a need for Congress to consider retaining the expanded allocations and eligibility criteria for the ETV outlined in the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2021 and to reconsider the current restrictions on Pell Grant policies for foster youth who are enrolled in college to ensure these federal policies better align with the reality of their educational trajectories (Day et al., 2021). Furthermore, reintroduction and passage of the Fostering Success in Higher Education Act (2019) would, for the first time, provide critical federal supports to build and maintain targeted precollege and campus support programs that have a demonstrated success at increasing college access and retention rates for foster youth. Finally, future federal infrastructure proposals should include broadband and transportation funding to support students getting to face-to-face classes, as well as maximize participation in virtual classrooms.

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6. Students With Disabilities in Postsecondary Education: Identifying and Addressing Barriers to Access and Success

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Introduction: Disability Prevalence and Intersectionality

Nineteen percent of college students are known to have disabilities (Snyder et al., 2019), which under the Americans With Disabilities Act of 1990 refers to (a) "a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities of such individual," (b) "a record of such an impairment," or (c) "being regarded as having such an impairment" (Section 12102).

The most common disabilities reported by college students are learning disabilities (e.g., dyslexia, dysgraphia), attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), psychiatric disabilities (e.g., anxiety, depression), health/chronic (e.g., asthma, diabetes, Crohn's disease), and mobility (Raue & Lewis, 2011). The figure of 19% of college students known to have disabilities refers only to students who self-disclose their disability to a higher education campus disability services office. The true number of disabled college students may be much higher, as students may not self-disclose their disability for a variety of reasons, such as fear of being stigmatized, not knowing how to navigate the college disability services system, or not possessing current documentation of disability (Newman & Madaus, 2015).

In the disability community, individuals refer to themselves in varying ways. Some prefer person-first language, which highlights the person before the disability, for example, "person with a disability," "person with ADHD," or "person with anxiety." Others prefer identity-first language, which recognizes disability as a prominent aspect of one's identity (Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education, 2014) — "disabled person," "Deaf person," or "autistic person," for instance. In this chapter, we use both person-first and identity-first language in respect of those who adhere to either philosophy and, most important, the individual's decision as to what language they use.

Prevalence of Disability in Higher Education

The post–high school educational attainment of people age 25 years and older with and without disabilities in 2014 differs. At the some college or associate's degree attainment level, people with disabilities and those with no disability are similar (25.5% vs. 26.8%). People with a disability were much less likely to earn a bachelor's degree or higher than were people with no disability (16.4% vs. 34.6%; U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2015). However, 76% of high school youth with an Individualized Education Program (IEP)[18] who receive special education services expect that they will obtain postsecondary education, showing a disconnect between expected postsecondary education and actual degree attainment (Lipscomb et al., 2017).

Intersectionality of Disability and Other Characteristics

Disabled college students have specific needs and could benefit from supports to ensure their success in higher education. This chapter provides background information on this population through the history of disability in the United States, discusses disabled students' transition experiences from high school to college, explores the unique college-level experiences of disabled students, discusses supports that could benefit this population, and provides a list of recommendations.

Disability Rights Are Civil Rights

Disability rights in the United States have been hard-earned, coming a long way from the 1880s eugenics movement that led to legally sanctioned forced sterilization of those considered unfit because they did not possess "ideal" superior genes

(Lumen Learning, n.d.; Ko, 2016). Fast-forwarding, the Civil Rights Act of 1964 prohibited discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, and national origin, but it did not require businesses serving the public to be accessible to those with disabilities. Public transportation continued to be inaccessible to wheelchair users, and disabled individuals had no legal right to attend public schools or be employed.

Congress addressed this discrimination with the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Section 504, which states that "no qualified individual with a disability in the United States shall be excluded from, denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance." And yet, no regulations were built into the law, making it virtually powerless. It was not until 1977, after a group of disabled protesters took over the San Francisco federal building for 28 days, that the animating regulations were signed into law (Cone, n.d.).

Still, the disability rights battle continued—over equal rights to accessible public transportation, protection in employment, and equal access to businesses serving the public. In 1990, Congress passed and the president signed the Americans With Disabilities Act (ADA) into law. This comprehensive civil rights legislation prohibited discrimination against individuals with disabilities and guaranteed them the same opportunities as all others to participate in mainstream American life—from employment and consumer opportunities to access to state and local government programs and services ADA, 1990.

Nevertheless, enforcement remained difficult. Courts routinely dismissed disability discrimination cases because the process for proving discrimination under the ADA presented challenges for many plaintiffs. Although the ADA Amendments Act of 2008 sought to strengthen the law's protections, it left the individual with a disability the burden of self-identifying in the workplace and on college campuses or risk not being accommodated (Grossman, 2014).

Disability in Higher Education

Historically, disabled individuals have encountered both opportunities and barriers in their pursuit of postsecondary education. Gallaudet University, founded in Washington, DC, in 1864, and the National Technical Institute for the Deaf at Rochester Institute of Technology, founded in 1965, opened professional pathways for Deaf individuals. With veterans returning from World War II and the GI Bill in mind, the University of Illinois was first in the nation to design its campus with wheelchair accessibility (Madaus, 2000). More recently, colleges and universities have worked to make their campuses physically and programmatically accessible in response to the passage of Section 504 and the ADA, leading to significant increases in the number and diversity of disabled students. Section 504 bars disability discrimination by any program or activity that either receives federal financial assistance or is conducted by any executive agency or the U.S. Postal Service.

And yet, students with disabilities have continued to encounter campus-based obstacles. Inaccessible physical and virtual environments, inadequate accommodations, and uninformed campus personnel are common at institutions ranging from prestigious universities to community colleges (Scott, 2019). Discrimination on the basis of disability is especially encountered by students with "hidden" or chronic conditions and mental illness (Jaschik, 2019).

Overarching ableist attitudes are common among faculty and administrators, leading to systems that exclude otherwise qualified students (Hehir, 2002). The National Center for College Students With Disabilities, a program of the Association on Higher Education and Disability and funded by the U.S. Department of Education, reports that while there have been inroads, much work remains to be done to improve campus climates for disabled students (Harbour & Greenberg, 2017).

Despite these barriers, the population of students with disabilities in postsecondary education has steadily increased over the years (De Brey et al., 2021). Education policy makers, administrators, and funders would do well to explore various experiences—legal, transitional, social, pedagogical, and financial—of disabled students seeking and pursuing postsecondary education to understand the opportunities and barriers.

Transition From High School to Postsecondary Education

In PK–12 education settings, all children with disabilities have the right to a free and appropriate public education guaranteed by the IDEA. Special education includes specially designed instruction in classrooms, at home, or in private or public institutions and may be accompanied by related services, such as speech therapy, occupational or physical therapy, psychological counseling, and medical diagnostic services necessary to the child's education. Students receive an IEP, which is a written plan for providing a special education experience at school that includes, among other things, a list of services provided, progress monitoring and annual goals. What is defined as an appropriate education for a student

varies, with an emphasis on placing students in the least restrictive environment (LRE; Beets et al., 2008) and determined by a multidisciplinary team. For one student, the appropriate LRE may comprise learning in general education classes and access to a paraprofessional, whereas for another student, the LRE may include learning in a self-contained special education classroom for all or part of the school day.

As students continue into high school settings, the focus shifts to transition services. According to the IDEA, transition services are

> a coordinated set of activities for a student, designed within an outcomes-oriented process, which promotes movement from school to post-school activities, including postsecondary education, vocational training, integrated employment (including supported employment), continuing and adult education, adult services, independent living, or community participation. (Section 1401)

Under the IDEA, transition services must start by the time a student enters high school or turns 16 years of age; some states begin providing these services earlier. A transition plan within the IEP identifies both in-school annual transition goals and postsecondary goals in the areas of further education/training, employment, and independent living, as appropriate. Examples of transition services include students attending or leading their IEP meetings, developing career awareness through occupational classes, and meeting with individuals from agencies like vocational rehabilitation. During the transition period, students also need to learn the differences between services provided to them at the high school level compared with the college level. However, this learning does not necessarily occur for all students. A lack of student knowledge on service differences in college can occur for a variety of reasons. Families rather than students may be leading the conversations about education; therefore the student fails to learn this information or to develop the self-determination skills needed to be successful in postsecondary education. Additionally, high schools may not be explicitly sharing this information with students and families due to lack of trained transition professionals or a lack of time.

Changes in Legal Coverage From High School to College

Once students graduate from, or age out of,[19] high school, they are no longer covered under the IDEA but instead are covered under the ADA and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act. In high schools, staff have an obligation to seek out students who may be eligible for special education, but this is not the case in postsecondary settings. Services a student received in high school will not automatically transfer to the college environment. When students attend postsecondary education, rights under the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (1974), a federal law protecting the privacy of student education records, are transferred to the student. As a result, students are in charge of making their own decisions related to education, and families no longer have access to the educational records without the student's consent. At the college level, students with disabilities must self-advocate and disclose their disability to the school's disability services office to receive services. Even with self-disclosure and services, students still encounter barriers in campus environments. The following section provides a detailed description of the college environment for disabled students.

Going to College as a Student With a Disability

Documentation and Disability Service Offices

Per the ADA, individual disability services offices can determine eligibility requirements for accommodations. Eligibility requirements include whether students must submit formal, medical documentation of disability, such as a psychological evaluation, to receive services. This is in part due to the vague definition of disability in the ADA. However, the language allows for a broad interpretation among clinicians. The ADA Amendments Act clarified this definition, specifically around the phrases "substantially limits" and "major life activities." Additionally, the amendments included that when receiving a diagnosis, individuals are to be evaluated without the use of auxiliary aids or medication (Keenan et al., 2019). Even with this guidance, the decision of what will be accepted as documentation of a disability falls to the institutions of postsecondary education.

The Association on Higher Education and Disability (AHEAD, 2012) article *Supporting Accommodation Requests: Guidance on Documentation Practices* recommends using the following documentation: primary coming from student

Table 6.1 Examples of Common Accommodations by Area of Need

Area of need	Accommodations
Common potential accommodations	
Communication	American Sign Language interpreter, real-time captioners
Memory or attention	Audio recording, note-taking software, note-taking assistance, PowerPoint slides in advance
Processing	Extended time on exams or quizzes
Sight or hearing	Alternative text (descriptions for videos or photos), captioning on videos, Braille, print materials converted for screen readers (so they can be read aloud)
Less common accommodations[a]	
Academic advisement	Support with course registration, selecting courses, selecting a major
Peer mentors	Academic or social support from a peer
Tutoring	One-on-one or small-group academic instruction
Personal assistants	Someone who can provide specialized support, often medical care
Scholarships	Financial support that can be used for costs related to disability (explained in Table 6.2)
Academic advisement	Support with course registration, selecting courses, selecting a major

[a] It should be noted that the less common accommodations may be available at public 4-year colleges, but in a decentralized manner, within an academic advising center, financial aid office, or other campus department, thus creating increased barriers to access or even knowledge regarding their existence. Other colleges may have state laws and policies and/or private resources available to provide the additional less common accommodation services within the disability services office, but again, students having the knowledge regarding how to access these services is critical to their use.

self-report; secondary coming directly from interactions and interviews with students; and tertiary from third parties, such as doctors. AHEAD highlights the importance of student self-reports and encourages disability services offices to make eligibility a flexible and individualized process. In this situation, students who do not have documentation may still be eligible for services. Disability services offices that choose not to follow AHEAD recommendations may require students to provide documentation in the form of neuropsychological evaluations within a certain time frame (e.g., within the past 3 years). Decisions on what eligibility requirements are followed vary from institution to institution, which may pose challenges to students if they transfer to a new college that has different documentation requirements. Students whose disability services of fce requires documentation in the form of neuropsychological evaluations can face f nancial challenges. Once students exit the PK–12 education system, the cost for these evaluations, which may be $2,500 or more (Learning Disabilities Association of America, n.d.), falls on the students and is typically not covered by insurance. Students who cannot afford the evaluation cannot prove their disability to the disability services office and therefore will not have access to the services they need to succeed in college. These services include accommodations, discussed in the following section.

Accommodations

Public colleges and universities are required under Title II of the ADA to provide auxiliary aids and services to disabled students to give them an equal opportunity to participate in all campus programs and environments (U.S. Department of Education, 1998). Title III of the ADA obligates private institutions in a similar way. These aids and services are commonly referred to as *accommodations* among students and campus disability professionals as well as in the law. "Accommodation" also refers to programmatic adjustments or considerations that address barriers in campus environments. As explained earlier, students are required to self-disclose and prove they have a disability to be eligible for these services. Disability services offices determine and apply accommodations by identifying the functional areas of need described by students' self-reporting and documentation (see Table 6.1 for a few examples).

Accommodations can be applied to college programs and services as well as to pedagogic settings. In the classroom, students might be eligible, for example, for extended time on exams if they have a disability affecting their information-processing abilities; for priority seating at the front of the classroom if they need fewer distractions while watching or listening to lectures; and for recording lectures if they have challenges with memory, attention, or hearing.

In campus housing, students may seek a single room if they need additional space for medical equipment or a room with central air conditioning if they have medical conditions requiring it. Students with disabilities affecting their digestion may

be allowed modifications to their meal plans. Some students may have an accommodation allowing them to take fewer credits and still be considered a full-time student by the college, though this may have a negative impact on their financial aid package (see Table 6.1). The National Center for College Students With Disabilities (2016) offers additional examples and discussion of accommodations.

Accommodations do not change the level of difficulty or amount of work students are required to complete. They change how students *access* materials or demonstrate knowledge. Accommodations are meant to provide people with disabilities equal access, and they must be "otherwise qualified" for the postsecondary setting. Accommodations are not guaranteed to every student in every situation. Disability law guides campuses in determining and applying accommodations on an individualized, case-by-case basis, and they are not meant to fundamentally alter academic programs and requirements. Thus some students may find themselves frustrated when they do not receive an accommodation they received in the K–12 setting (e.g., modifications to or elimination of homework assignments). Campuses are increasingly exploring a universal design (UD) approach to their programs (see Table 6.1), which may diminish the continual need for school officials to review applications for accommodations.

Disability Awareness and Stigma

For postsecondary students with disabilities, the combined act of registering for and using disability services has been associated with improved academic outcomes (Newman & Madaus, 2015). However, most postsecondary students with disabilities do not register for or use these services. For instance, approximately only 35% of postsecondary students with disabilities disclose their disability to their institutions, as required to receive accommodations and services. Furthermore, research has found that when comparing samples of students with disabilities in PK–12 versus postsecondary education settings, approximately 98% of these students received accommodations and services prior to exiting high school, whereas only 24% received them in postsecondary education (Newman & Madaus, 2015). As a result of not disclosing their disability, students may work not with disability service professionals but with student affairs professionals, who may not be trained in the work, a circumstance that highlights the need to train a wider variety of professionals for disabilities services (Kimball et al., 2016).

Among the reasons that students with disabilities might not disclose their condition, and thus need for and entitlement to accommodations, are those that relate to documentation. For example, students may not know or even be aware of the requirement to provide documentation, let alone that it is their responsibility for acquiring it; what constitutes appropriate documentation; and that after they leave K–12 education, they are required to bear the costs, which can exceed $2,500.

Students also may choose not to disclose their disability due to fears of being stigmatized and discriminated against. Research has found that students worry about faculty perceiving them differently than peers without disabilities and that, as a result, less will be expected of them. Students have also reported faculty and academic advisers lacking disability-related knowledge (Hong, 2015; Wilson et al., 2000); having negative interactions with faculty, including faculty members' refusal to provide accommodations (Fleming et al., 2017); and feeling patronized by their instructors (Majoko, 2018).

Although individuals with disabilities encompass approximately one fifth of college students, these learners' experiences are not often a focus of campus awareness events, thus preventing opportunities for faculty and student to learn about one another and the challenges, roles, and responsibilities on each side. Disability-awareness training has been shown to enhance faculty members' knowledge of disability-related issues, processes, and requirements; develop their confidence in teaching inclusively; and improve their attitudes toward students with disabilities (Wynants & Dennis, 2017). Postsecondary students experience similar benefits when participating in disability-related training. Mueller and Peck (2019) found that disability-awareness education expanded undergraduate art majors' views of disability and loosened their stereotypes. College students who mentored disabled peers after undergoing disability-awareness preparation, which entailed firsthand experiences in learning about disability, reported deeper understanding of disability-related issues, improved attitudes toward disability, and reductions in disability-related stigma (Athamanah et al., 2020; Harrison et al., 2019). Thus campus-wide disability-awareness training may offer a promising approach to improving faculty, staff, and student knowledge of disabilities and the issues involved and may help to reduce disability-related stigmatization and stereotyping.

While diversity-related initiatives and activities are commonplace on college campuses, they are not always a priority and, as a result, may not receive adequate attention or energy. This lack of emphasis can perpetuate misunderstandings surrounding disability and can even prevent students from learning about their own disabilities in a postsecondary context.

Table 6.2 A Sample of Disability-Related Cost Considerations for Students and Families

Area or service	Typical/average cost (USD)
Disability documentation	Neuropsychological evaluation (used to diagnose a wide range of disabilities—ADHD, learning disabilities, intellectual disabilities, mental health, autism, etc.): $500–$2,500+, depending on the region of the country[a]
Transportation	Van wheelchair-access conversion: $30,000[a]
Service animals	Veterinary services, general care, feeding, ongoing training: $500–$30,000[b]
Technology	Assistive listening device: $900; Braille keyboard: $1,300–$3,000; Kurzweil (reading software): $500–$700; adjustable desk: $1,000[a]

Note. These costs were estimated in 2021 and may increase over time. [a]Average, one-time cost throughout college. [b]Yearly cost varies depending on when the service animal was obtained and trained.

And while disability issues are often overseen by disability services offices, these offices typically approach accommodation on an individual level. Although this practice may facilitate individualized services, it also may situate disability with the student rather than as an institutional responsibility.

Other reasons postsecondary students with disabilities do not disclose their disabilities or register for disability-related services include a lack of knowledge regarding their legal rights, the availability of services and their entitlement to them, their desire to attempt college independently rather than relying on accommodations or services, and a lack of transition planning.

Financial Inequities for College Students With Disabilities

At least two financial issues are at play in ensuring access to quality postsecondary education and success for disabled students: campus funding for accommodations and individual student financial support.

Cabinet-level administrators are not always familiar with their institutions' responsibilities to ensure the accessibility of their campuses. There is no federal guidance about line-item funding of auxiliary aids and services for students (U.S. Department of Justice, 2009). Depending on an institution's understanding of and commitment to student accommodations, the disability services office may have a fixed—and minimal—budget and lack the flexibility to accommodate the unexpected student who needs an expensive form of service (e.g., American Sign Language [ASL] interpreting, captioning, lab aide, specific software). Colleges and universities need to regularly assess their provision of accommodations to determine both regular and unexpected costs and establish a funding source to ensure that no student will be denied necessary access, which is fundamental to the quality of the college experience of students with disabilities.

Disabled students' personal funding for college is equally crucial. Wolanin (2005) discusses inequities between disabled college students and their nondisabled peers. A high proportion of students with disabilities come from lower-income homes. They also have a number of disability-related costs, such as those related to travel to medical appointments, medications, caring for service animals, and hiring personal-care attendants. Table 6.2 shows typical and average costs to students and families for sample equipment and aids. Family insurance rarely covers the entire cost of treatment and services. Auxiliary services, such as tutoring or academic coaching, come out of students' pockets. These disability-specific costs are in addition to other expenses, such as childcare or housing.

Although students may have had an IEP in high school, the testing done to diagnose a disability may have been conducted while the student was very young, with the resulting documentation not representative of the impact of disability in young adulthood. As previously discussed, without documentation of disability to verify that students qualify as disabled, students can be denied critical accommodations and support, which will undermine retention and graduation. Students from low-income backgrounds in particular may encounter financial barriers to acquiring updated documentation, such as diagnostic evaluations, which can cost thousands of dollars (Learning Disabilities Association of America, n.d.).

Students who are eligible for federal, state, and campus-based financial aid may find themselves hamstrung by the limited amount of aid available to cover an unmet disability need. Rules that limit funding due to part-time status, even when a reduced course load is deemed a disability accommodation, can be onerous (Wolanin, 2005). State vocational

rehabilitation, once a reliable source of educational support, offers little funding for postsecondary training now (Gilmore et al., 2001). State or local funding programs, such as Medicaid, provide only basic support. Generous donors and disability organizations have created scholarships and grants that are often so specific in their requirements that most students with disabilities cannot apply for them.

More federal, state, higher education, and foundation funding sources need to be developed and made available to support institutional accessibility and moderate- to low-income students requiring diagnoses or who have educational or disability-related needs. Progress is being made through federal agencies that take an economic development approach to foster the skill development of potential workers with disabilities (U.S. Department of Labor, n.d.). Programs like Disability:IN[20] represent corporate America's ostensible commitment to addressing the underemployment of disabled people (Kessler Foundation & University of New Hampshire, 2021) and building a diverse workforce and welcoming workplaces. Partnerships between public and private entities also hold potential for developing support for college students with disabilities.

Supports for Disabled College Students

College Promise

Though it is not universal for college promise programs to provide support to students with disabilities, some promise programs provide specific supports benefiting students with disabilities. Here are some examples:

- The San Diego Promise at San Diego Community College District[21] notes that students who take fewer than 12 credits are eligible for the program if they have an accommodation stating that they should have a lighter course load than other students. The program also provides access to peer mentors, which can benefit all students, but especially those with disabilities (San Diego Community College District, n.d.).
- South Bay Promise at El Camino College[22] provides funding for students who have fewer than 12 credits if they have a decreased-credit academic accommodation (El Camino College, n.d.).
- The Promise Scholars Program at Skyline College in San Bruno, California,[23] allows funding to be used for costs like "intensive counseling and academic support," especially beneficial for disabled students who may already require those supports (Skyline College, n.d.).

Universal Design of Instruction

A major step beyond the ADA is the incorporation of UD (CAST, 2018), as responsibility for accessibility becomes the responsibility of society. As the RL Mace Universal Design Institute (2019) puts it, "The Institute's work manifests the belief that all new environments and products, to the greatest extent possible, should and can be made usable by everyone regardless of age, ability, or circumstance" ((RL Mace Universal Design Institute, 2019, About UDI section).

To apply UD to higher education, McGuire et al. (2003) suggested universal design of instruction (UDI), a framework used to "anticipate diverse learning needs in college classrooms and to incorporate effective instructional strategies to make learning more accessible to students with disabilities" (Scott et al., 2001, p. 11). UDI encompasses a proactive approach to course design and the use of inclusive teaching strategies to provide access to the greatest number of learners, including not only students with disabilities but other marginalized learners, such as students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds, international students, and/or those whose first language is not English. This framework includes nine principles to guide instructors to ensure their class materials and instruction are equitable, flexible, simple and intuitive, and perceptible and that they anticipate error, require low physical effort, and promote respectful and inclusive classroom environments. Table 6.3 includes definitions and examples of each principle.

The impact of COVID-19 on college students with disabilities is an example of how UDI should be put into practice. In the spring 2020 semester, colleges shifted to remote learning due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Learning through this new method, synchronously or asynchronously, presented both challenges and advantages for students with disabilities.

As a result of the instructional format changes, more than half of students (58%) required new or adjusted accommodations (Madaus et al., 2021). Disabled students experienced financial challenges more often than nondisabled students, specifically around technology and housing needs (Soria et al., 2020a).

Table 6.3 The Nine Principles of Universal Design of Instruction

Principle	Definition	Example
1. Equitable use	Instruction is designed to be equally accessible to all learners, providing identical or equivalent means to all students	A multiple-choice exam and a take-home essay exam assess the same information
2. Flexibility in use	Instruction is designed to include options and flexibility to accommodate learners with diverse abilities	Textbook reading assignments are also provided in digital formats
3. Simple and intuitive	Instruction is clear and predictable and eliminates unnecessary complexity	Large assignments are broken down into smaller steps and deadlines
4. Perceptible information	Instruction effectively communicates necessary information to students, accommodating for environmental conditions or sensory abilities	Videos shown in class contain closed captions
5. Tolerance for error	Instruction allows for a variety in students' learning pace and skill acquisition	Instructors give students multiple opportunities to complete assignments (e.g., assign six response papers but require only five to be handed in)
6. Low physical effort	Instruction minimizes physical effort that is nonessential to learning outcomes	Vary instruction between lecture, group, and individual activities to minimize learner fatigue
7. Size and space for approach and use	Instruction and learning activities can accommodate students of various sizes and with different mobility and communication needs	Consider the classroom: Can wheelchairs fit comfortably within desks? Is the lighting appropriate?
8. A community of learners	The learning environment fosters communication among students and between students and faculty and reflects different levels of prior knowledge	Faculty offer a range of ways to communicate with students, including via email, live-chat hours, or office hours, to discuss student needs
9. Instructional climate	Instruction welcomes and is accessible to all types of learners and maintains rigorous academic standards for all	Instructor presents in syllabus and in a class statement an invitation to students to share their learning needs

Note. Adapted from Scott *et al.* (2001), p. 13. Adapted with permission.

On the other hand, some students with disabilities had positive experiences through the inclusion of UDI principles during remote learning. Examples include the availability of recorded lectures and PowerPoint slides, which students normally would have had to request through their disability services office. Students who previously may have been penalized for poor attendance due to chronic medical conditions have been able to attend courses asynchronously. Students who have difficulty hearing instructors but were not fluent in ASL or not qualified for real-time captioning could be provided subtitles. With the greater inclusion of UDI in courses, materials were more accessible to all students, which eased the strain on disability services offices.

Recommendations

Barriers to access and success for college students with disabilities are multilayered and often intersect in complex ways. Our recommendations (listed in Figure 6.1) describe what we believe would provide the broadest levels of access for the most students with disabilities who are seeking or currently in postsecondary settings.

Federal-Level Change	**Standardize Postsecondary-Level Disability Identification Procedures** ▪ Lack of standardization in disability identification procedures across institutes of higher education may prevent access to services, creating inequitable opportunities for success from one college to another. Develop standardized disability identification procedures. **Provide Student Financial Support to Obtain Evaluation and Pay for Disability-Related Expenses** ▪ Lack of documentation prevents access to accommodations at many institutions. Providing additional financial assistance or allowing students to use financial aid to obtain diagnosis, evaluation, or assessment will help in gaining accommodations to address potential campus barriers. ▪ Many disabled students have additional costs related to their disabilities. Financial aid awards need to take this unmet need, which may outpace that of their nondisabled peers, into consideration. **Rethink the Federal Financial Aid Formula to Include Students Taking Reduced Credits** ▪ The federal formula for financial aid should recognize students approved for reduced course loads. As such, those students should be treated as full-time students eligible for typical financial aid. **Foster Increased Public–Private Partnerships** ▪ Scholarships and other financial opportunities need to be developed for the broad range of students with disabilities in mind so more students can apply and gain support for college.
College Promise Programs	**Collect Data on Students with Disabilities** ▪ College students with disabilities have specific needs necessary to attain college and be successful. Beginning next fiscal year (2022), we encourage college promise programs to regularly collect demographic data on students with disabilities who are being supported by their programs. Adjusting current college promise programs' requirements to identify disabled students as a target population would increase access to funds for this specific group of students.
Higher Education–Level Change	**Fund the Development of Training for Disability Awareness to Dispel Ableism** ▪ Stigma surrounding disability often prevents self-disclosure (and therefore receipt of services). Creating a training for members of postsecondary institutions will increase knowledge and understanding and reduce ableist behaviors. **Increase Faculty Knowledge of Universal Design of Instruction** ▪ Instructors can design courses with accountability in mind using UDI procedures, which can provide benefits for all students. Knowledge could be increased through faculty training.
Local Education Agency–Level Change	**Fund Training for Transition Service Providers in High Schools** ▪ Trained professionals will be better able to prepare students for the difference between high school and postsecondary settings. Trained professionals will also teach students self-determination skills, which are crucial for success in life after high school.

Figure 6.1 Recommendations for increasing access and success for disabled students in postsecondary settings.

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7. Designing a Student Parent Promise Ecosystem: A Blueprint for Investing in the Success of Student Parents and Their Families

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Approximately one fifth of college students are parents (Institute for Women's Policy Research & Ascend at the Aspen Institute, 2020). Student parents are less likely to attain a degree or certificate than students without children, and they are more likely to leave college before earning a degree or certificate (Contreras-Mendez & Reichlin Cruse, 2021; IWPR & Ascend, 2020). When student parents do graduate, they see significant benefits. Holding a degree has been shown to lead to higher paying jobs, higher rates of employment, access to benefits like pensions and health insurance, better health outcomes, and improved outcomes for students' children, including a greater likelihood that they will attend college themselves (Attewell et al., 2007; Carnevale et al., 2011; Cutler & Lleras-Muney, 2006; Hout, 2012; Ma et al., 2019; Vilorio, 2016).

Research shows that investments in single mothers would benefit their children, their communities, and society as a whole (Reichlin Cruse et al., 2019). A 2019 cost–benefit analysis on the effects of degree attainment on single mothers' economic outcomes found that a college degree substantially increases lifetime earnings for single mothers, in addition to generating more tax revenue and saving billions in public benefit spending (Reichlin Cruse et al., 2019). Investing in a student parent promise program would likely increase the academic success of student parents in higher education, contribute skills to the workforce, improve the economy's ability to meet labor market demands, increase racial equity, and boost families' opportunities for social mobility and economic security. While a broad and generous federal investment would serve these goals best, state and local or philanthropic investments in a student parent promise could also have a significant impact.

The promise program model proposed here (see Figure 7.1) recommends comprehensive support for student parents by centering their unique experiences and needs to promote postsecondary persistence and completion. Elements of this model promise program include free or subsidized childcare, wraparound services, and institutional-practice reforms. These supports are intended to help student parents navigate complex systems and meet basic needs through discretionary resources, food and housing security resources, health and wellness services, and intensive case management. Although many other student populations could also benefit from similar services as well as from a broad-based promise program covering tuition and fees, the focus in this chapter is on the additional or different investments needed to support student parents specifically.

The Student Parent College Experience and Implications for Support Needs

Understanding Student Parents

Nearly 4 million college students are raising children while enrolled, the largest share of whom (42%) attend community colleges (IWPR & Ascend, 2020).[24] Seventy percent of student parents are mothers (2.7 million), 30% are fathers (1.1 million), and 40% are single parents. Student parents are more likely to be students of color than White, to have children who are of preschool age or younger, and to have higher GPAs in college than students without children (IWPR & Ascend, 2020). Most student parents also work at least half-time (55% of parents work 25 hours or more per week), and many start and stop their enrollment at least once over the course of their college careers.[25]

These journeys lend student parents perspective, wisdom, and self-confidence that many first-time-enrolled college students may not have developed yet (Contreras-Mendez & Reichlin Cruse, 2021). Student parents also have well-developed time-management skills that enable them to balance the competing demands of parenthood, work, and school. Still, student parents are more likely to leave college without earning a college degree than their peers. Just 18% earn an associate's or bachelor's degree within 6 years of enrolling in college, compared with half (51%) of students without children.[26]

Student parents' relatively low attainment rates stem from the postsecondary access and completion obstacles they face. Research shows, for example, that student parents face higher tuition and nontuition costs of attendance than their peers

Figure 7.1 Elements of a college promise program for student parents.

without children. According to research from California Competes (2020), student parents' costs are nearly $8,000 higher than those of their peers without children when the costs of childcare and food are included. A study by the Georgetown Center for Poverty and Inequality estimated that older adult learners (aged 25–45 years) with children face about $5,900 in additional expenses beyond tuition and in excess of what students without dependents face (Palacios et al., 2021). As a result, student parents, especially single mothers and Black student parents, also carry more educational debt: The median student debt of student mothers enrolled in 2015–2016 was $8,300, versus $3,500 for women students without children; single mothers' education debt was nearly 2.7 times greater than the debt of women students without children. Black student parents hold more student debt than other parents and nonparents: an average of $18,100, compared with the $13,500 average among all students (IWPR & Ascend, 2020).

Basic-needs insecurity is substantial in the student parent population (Goldrick-Rab et al., 2020). Among student parents at 2-year colleges, 54% were food insecure, 69% were housing insecure, and 17% experienced homelessness (Goldrick-Rab et al., 2020).[27] Research suggests that basic-needs insecurity is more prevalent among students who cannot afford childcare (Goldrick-Rab et al., 2020). The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated student parents' challenges related to job and food security; access to affordable, high-quality, reliable childcare; and navigating virtual learning environments for themselves and their children (Reichlin Cruse et al., 2020a).

The time demands related to parenting while pursuing college can also impede student parents' college persistence and completion (Wladis et al., 2018). Single mothers enrolled in college full-time, for example, spend 9 hours a day on care and housework (e.g., active childcare, supervisory care, housework) compared with the 2 hours a day that other female college students without children spend on the same tasks (Reichlin Cruse et al., 2018).

The financial and time poverty these students experience can take a significant psychological toll. Studies suggest that student parents experience mental health challenges (including high levels of depression and anxiety) at higher rates than do their nonparent peers (Ascend & JED Foundation, 2021; Goldrick-Rab et al., 2020). Mental health challenges that student parents experience include feelings of isolation and a low sense of belonging in college, feelings compounded by the stress associated with meeting the needs of their families and the daily stresses of college coursework (Ascend & JED Foundation, 2021).

Supportive Services Can Promote Student Parents' College Access and Completion

Substantial research asserts that targeted support services can improve student parents' ability to attend college and tend to their own well-being while enrolled and improve their graduation rates. Findings from a national survey by Generation Hope (2020) suggest that institutional policy and practice, physical family-friendly spaces on campus, and institutional culture contribute to how successfully student parents navigate higher education. Student parents who responded to the survey reported feeling unwelcome and disconnected from their institutions and that student services were not created to serve students like them (Lewis & Haynes, 2020). A qualitative study by the Institute for Women's Policy Research (IWPR) found similar views among student parents who took prolonged enrollment breaks, with many commenting on their

desire for more intentional guidance and supports for students with children and for adult learners (Contreras-Mendez & Reichlin Cruse, 2021).

Evidence suggests that access to affordable and reliable childcare, case management, and financial assistance can improve student parent outcomes. Analysis of data from Monroe Community College in New York State found that student parents who were enrolled for at least three consecutive terms and used the campus childcare center were 21% more likely to earn a degree than student parents who did not use the campus childcare center (Reichlin Cruse et al., 2019). In addition, intensive case management (e.g., coaching, mentoring, and referrals to services) has been shown to improve student outcomes (Bettinger & Baker, 2014; Evans et al., 2017; Scrivener et al., 2015). Financial support has also been shown to increase degree completion, especially for low-income students (Franke, 2014; Goldrick-Rab et al., 2016), and especially when programs are designed to be simple and easily accessible (Dynarski & Scott-Clayton, 2013).

Building supportive, inclusive, and affordable pathways to college completion for students with families of their own is vital to promoting broader socioeconomic mobility for the students and produces important economic benefits for the state and, more broadly, the country. In a 2020 study, the IWPR examined the costs and benefits of investing in supportive services for single-mother students and found that at the national level and for every state, the investment in childcare, case management, and financial assistance for currently enrolled single mothers would result in a significant return on investment. For example at the national level, the United States would receive approximately $4.30 in return for every dollar spent on childcare, $5.48 for every dollar spent on case management services, and $5.05 for every extra dollar used to provide additional financial assistance to single mothers (Reichlin Cruse et al., 2019). The return on investment would be in multiple forms (e.g., increased payroll taxes paid by skilled workers, lower social service outlays).

Principles Guiding the Student Parent Promise

The student parent promise should be designed with the understanding that student parents are assets to their postsecondary institutions, to their local communities, and to society as a whole. To achieve the best results in terms of improved college access and completion and to best serve the interests of student parents and their families, the student parent promise program should be guided by specific principles of excellence to ensure that services provided to students set them and their children up for success. In practice, there will be trade-offs among some of these priorities, and programs should be designed to make the best use of whatever resources are available. Nevertheless, to the extent possible, the student parent promise program and the services provided through it should be designed with the following principles in mind.

Intentionality

Student parents and their families should be a key focus of the programs that serve them, and they should be regarded as assets to campuses and the higher education community in general. This intentionality would mean that key programs are as accessible to student parents as they are to other members of the community and that they are accessible to all student parents—including those who are returning to college after prolonged enrollment breaks and regardless of age or high school academic outcomes.

It also means that there are services and resources that are designed specifically with them in mind. This can include the provision of family-specific resources, such as free diapers or formula; the development of spaces on campus that are built intentionally for families and children; the training of staff on the unique experiences and needs of student parents and the strategies and resources they can leverage to support those students' well-being and college success; and the orientation of campus childcare centers to prioritize the childcare needs of enrolled students.

High Quality

The quality of childcare and wraparound services should be as good as or better than what is available to middle-income nonstudent families. The wraparound supports, services, and resources provided should be student parent and family centered, youth friendly, nonjudgmental, and of the highest quality. The childcare component of the promise can be achieved through a combination of high-quality, campus-based programs and childcare assistance for student parents at a level that allows access to strong off-campus options as well. Campus-based labs and institutional leaders like the City University

of New York (CUNY), which operates 17 campus childcare centers (City University of New York, n.d.-b), are models of high-quality programs. States' childcare quality rating and improvement systems (QRIS) provide one set of starting points for establishing quality baselines for the childcare component of the promise (National Center on Early Childhood Quality Assurance, n.d.). Where not enough high-quality childcare options are available, the promise program will need resources to help increase the supply.

Affordability

Affordability is built into the notion of all promise program designs. Ideally, childcare and wraparound supports would be offered to student parents at no cost. At a minimum, programs that support student success should be as accessible financially to student parents as they are to nonparents. If required by limited program resources, the programs could be income limited so that, for example, they would be free to all students with family incomes below a threshold (e.g., $50,000), by family size, or to those who meet existing criteria for income-based programs, including but not limited to Pell Grants, Medicaid, earned income tax credits, or SNAP. No additional paperwork should be required of students. The information already included on the Free Application for Federal Student Aid or on one of the state forms developed to serve undocumented students or provided to establish eligibility for participation in a campus's CCAMPIS program should be sufficient.

"Affordability" is only meaningful if it includes having the time and psychological bandwidth to pursue higher education without excessive sacrifice. Ideally, the promise program would ensure, through its provision of childcare, wraparound services, and institutional-practice reforms, that student parents can attend college while parenting, and sometimes working, without significant mental or physical health repercussions, loss of sleep, or loss of desired time with children and family.

Predictability

The childcare and wraparound supports provided through the promise program should be predictable in terms of initial qualification, the benefits offered, and the number of terms or years available. Predictability is the component that distinguishes promise programs from many other forms of need-based financial aid. Eligible student parents should know as early as possible that they will qualify and what the program involves. They should not have to wait until after they have decided to apply to college or to attend a specific institution. After all, one goal of the promise concept is to influence those decisions in positive ways. Linking eligibility to existing antipoverty programs or to a specific income threshold would enable a large segment of the eligible population to know they will qualify without having to apply first.

Also inherent in the idea of the promise is a multiyear commitment until degree completion, not subject to budget fluctuations or annual renewal criteria other than those built into the students' academic programs. The estimated costs of programs will have to be budgeted across multiple years, with reserves or guarantees to ensure the funder(s) can fully meet their commitments.

Flexibility

Programs need to accommodate students' complex academic, professional, and personal schedules. While they should be designed to support the ability of students to attend school continuously and full-time, they should not assume that it will always be possible or in students' best interests to do so. The children's educational and personal needs should also be considered. For example, students who need to scale back their attendance or take a semester off should not be required to immediately withdraw from or reduce the number of hours of childcare they are receiving through the promise program, including at campus-based centers. This would ensure consistency of care for the child. Students also need flexibility in terms of childcare location; timing and type of provider, including center based, home based, and drop-in; and care during school breaks and nontraditional hours.

Portability

The student parent promise should allow for student parents' choice to attend the range of colleges and universities for which they qualify academically so that their options for college enrollment are as close as possible to those of students

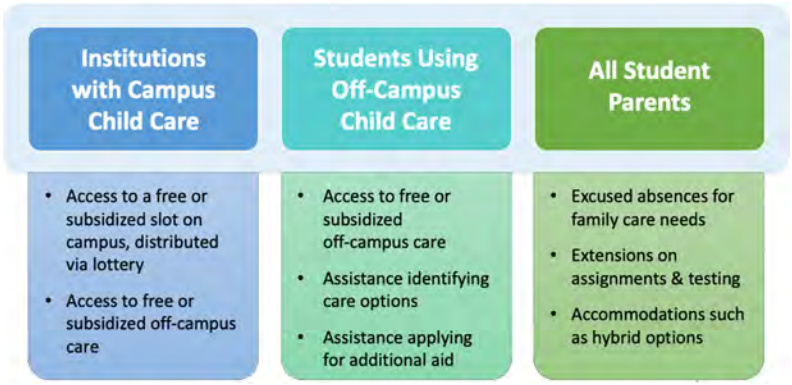

Figure 7.2 Components of the childcare promise.

without children. In practice, students in smaller communities may still have only one or two choices, but in medium and large metropolitan areas, programs should use their financial leverage to reduce barriers, such as community college districts and school attendance zones. School districts should be incentivized to allow children of students attending college nearby to enroll their children in public schools or afterschool programs. Community colleges should be encouraged to open their admissions to students living anywhere within commuting distance rather than limiting to a specific zone. The supportive service elements of the promise also need to be transferable when students change institutions, so that a student who intends to start at a community college and to transfer to a 4-year institution for a bachelor's degree can count on care at every stage.

Components of the Student Parent Promise

Childcare

At the center of the promise for student parents is a commitment to high-quality childcare for dependents up to the age of 5 years and for children ages 6–12 years who need before/aftercare or care over school breaks. The promise should include the direct provision of childcare services or sufficient financial resources to enable every student parent to access needed care for their children so they are able to attend their postsecondary education programs (see Figure 7.2). Childcare services should be provided with zero cost to students who qualify for federal antipoverty programs, such as Pell, Medicaid, or SNAP; student parents who do not qualify would receive subsidies based on a sliding income scale. For the small share of student parents who do not receive free childcare through the promise, subsidies would be enough to guarantee that no student would pay more than 7% of their income on childcare, relying on a sliding scale.

At institutions with campus childcare, the promise would include access to a slot of either on-campus or of fcampus care, including home-based care, of their choosing, within certain quality parameters, for the duration of their enrollment (see Figure 7.2). On-campus slots would be distributed among students via a lottery open to all who want one. For students using off-campus care, the promise would include assistance identifying care options that fit students' needs around scheduling, age, and care type (age, curriculum, setting) and securing slots. It would also include assistance in applying for additional aid that could be put toward the cost of additional care needs.

All students would be able to receive excused absences for reasons related to caring for a child or family member, including child illness, breakdowns in childcare arrangements, and so on. Appropriate extensions on assignments and testing would be given for these reasons when needed. Additional accommodations, such as hybrid options, would also be available—for example, students could, but would not be required to, attend class virtually if they must stay home with a child.

Because the current supply of campus- and community-based childcare would not meet the full needs of enrolled student parents, let alone those of parents who would want to enroll as a result of the student parent promise, investment in significantly increasing the supply of affordable and high-quality childcare would be integral to the implementation of the program. Options for funding this increase in childcare supply are discussed in the "Financing the Student Parent Promise" section of this chapter.

Wraparound Supports

The student parent promise must also include access to additional wraparound supports for student parents. While many student parents experience similar challenges as their peers without children, having a child adds an additional layer of complexity. Our recommended promise recognizes that student parents have limited time and capacity, fewer financial resources, and greater food and housing insecurity compared with their childless peers. Securing a place to sleep that is safe and secure and having access to sufficient, healthy food, for example, impact both the student and their child(ren). With the understanding that events outside of the classroom affect what happens in the classroom, wraparound supports can free up needed resources and capacity to help student parents focus on academic pursuits.

Discretionary Resources

Student parents have greater financial need than nonparents, making discretionary resources particularly beneficial to their ability to persist and complete. Among the vehicles for providing student parents with additional financial assistance are the following.

Emergency Aid

Colleges and nonprofits typically provide emergency aid to support students dealing with an immediate need, such as car problems, technology issues, childcare, or, more recently, COVID-19-related issues, that could derail a student from staying enrolled. Colleges and universities should prioritize student parents for emergency aid, as CUNY did with its Chancellor's Emergency Relief Grant Program (City University of New York, n.d.-a).

Scholarships

Scholarships provided by the institution, employers, or community or philanthropic organizations could prioritize students with children and offset tuition and nontuition expenses. The Jeannette Rankin Scholarship Fund,[28] for example, provides financial and coaching support for women — mostly mothers — aged 35 years and older who are returning to college. The Internal Revenue Service also allows employers to deduct up to $5,250 annually in tuition reimbursements.

Financial Aid Designations That Account for Student Parents' Greater Financial Need

Currently the federal government allows students with dependents to qualify for a dependent care allowance to account for the cost of childcare in federal aid awards, but it is not well known and does not necessarily qualify parents for more grant aid (Emrey-Arras, 2019). More effective communication about the allowance could increase participation by student parents who are open to taking on student loan debt; in a promise program environment, the implications of this debt would be minimized, because the program would cover other tuition and nontuition costs. The Pell Grant program could also be recalibrated to provide more support to student parents based on their higher level of financial need.

State Financial Aid

States can provide supplemental funds, on top of federal financial aid, to subsidize student parents' additional expenses. For example, the Cal Grant program, a need-based financial aid program for California college students attending one of the state's public college and university systems, provides additional funds for this purpose. Under the Students With Dependent Children Grant, student parent Cal Grant recipients can receive up to $6,000 in additional aid (California State Aid Commission, n.d.).

Temporary Assistance for Needy Families Cash Assistance

Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) is a federal assistance program in which states set the eligibility criteria. According to the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities (2021), states have broad discretion to allocate TANF funds as long as they serve one of four goals, including "promoting job preparation," which could encompass funding for student parents.

Supports to Establish Food Security

The prevalence of food insecurity among student parent families makes support for their ability to access healthy, reliable, and adequate food critical to any student parent promise model. Providing this support can be accomplished in a number of ways, including on-campus provision, partnerships with local food providers, and leveraging federal nutrition assistance support.

Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program

SNAP is a federally funded, state-administered entitlement program that helps approximately 39 million low-income people in nearly 20 million households put food on the table each month and that has lifted millions out of poverty (Feeding America, 2021). Research suggests that only 29% of student parents experiencing food insecurity at 4-year institutions use SNAP (Goldrick-Rab et al., 2020), in part because of a misconception that students are not eligible if enrolled more than part-time. Providing better information to institutions and student parents about potential SNAP eligibility, while taking steps to reduce stigma associated with the program, could significantly increase the resources going to student parents, without requiring specific legislative action or appropriation.

Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children

The Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children, better known as the WIC program, provides nutritional resources to low-income pregnant, postpartum, and breast-feeding women; infants; and children up to age 5 years, as well as information on healthy eating, including breast-feeding promotion and support, and referrals to health care (Food and Nutrition Service, 2013). WIC participants must meet state residency and income requirements and have been determined to be at nutritional risk. There are no specific student requirements or restrictions in the WIC program. However, student parents at 2- and 4-year institutions are less likely than nonstudents to receive WIC benefits (Goldrick-Rab et al., 2020). Institutions should make efforts to inform students about eligibility requirements and bring WIC representatives to campus to help students apply for benefits.

Campus Food Pantries

Food pantries are critical for providing direct, on-campus food resources. Students should have regularly available access to varied kinds of baby formula, baby food, and purified water. Incoming and current students should be informed of these resources and know how to access them. The staff who provide direct access to formulas, supplements, and other baby food should be familiar with the products as well. In addition, campus food and nutrition education should include information on nutrition for children. On-campus registered dietitians should be trained to serve student parents and their families. Student parents' children should have the opportunity to engage in learning opportunities as well, such as through interactive cooking classes and experiential learning through gardening. Finally, institutions should use language carefully to reduce stigma associated with experiencing food insecurity (Baker-Smith et al., 2020).

Supports for Establishing Secure Housing

The student parent promise would account for higher housing costs experienced by student parents who often cannot live with roommates, who need housing with multiple bedrooms, and for whom a location near their school, work, or childcare is particularly important. Institutions participating in the promise should ensure efficient and equitable distribution of support and resources related to housing for student parent families. They should also work with communities and states and leverage federal programs to find creative solutions to improve student parents' access to affordable housing.

Family Housing on or Near Campus

Campuses that offer on-campus housing should include appropriate units for student parent families, especially when off-campus options are hard to find or are more (and possibly prohibitively) expensive. Importantly, campuses should make intentional efforts to include affordable family housing in their strategic plans.

Emergency Housing

Campuses should have plans to help homeless students that include provisions for their dependents. If they offer emergency on-campus housing, they will need protocols to allow for children to live with parents in dormitories, if needed. Campuses can also work with local housing authorities, as Tacoma Community College and the University of Washington – Tacoma have done.

Health and Wellness

Having access to affordable and high-quality health care, including sexual and reproductive health care and information; primary care; prenatal, infant, and maternal care; and mental health care is a basic requirement for students wanting to pursue and succeed in higher education (Ascend & JED Foundation, 2021; Bernstein & Reichlin Cruse, 2020). Parent promise institutions should consider how best to connect student parents with needed health care, resources, and information, including direct services, referrals to trusted and affordable providers, educational opportunities, free health resources, assistance with transportation to health appointments, and assistance applying for health insurance.

Sexual and Reproductive Health

Evidence suggests that expanded access to comprehensive sexual and reproductive health care can improve educational outcomes (Bernstein & Reichlin Cruse, 2020). For student parents who do not want to get pregnant while enrolled in college, for example, colleges and universities — and state policy makers — can help them access comprehensive, affordable, and reliable birth control options, including access to over-the-counter contraception. For pregnant students, assistance finding sources of affordable prenatal, maternal, and infant health care can support the health and well-being of both parent and child. Campuses that do not operate health clinics can partner with local providers and health departments and with mobile clinics to facilitate access to care and resources for their students. Federal and state governments can improve access to health care for student parent families by ensuring that funding for programming geared to pregnant and parenting young people is made accessible to campuses and college students.

Diapers and Other Physical Health Needs

Students with children have needs for health products (e.g., diapers) and services (e.g., pediatricians) that other students do not. One in three families lack a sufficient supply of diapers to keep an infant or child clean, dry, and healthy (National Diaper Bank Network, 2021). Funds from safety net programs like SNAP and WIC cannot be used to purchase diapers; thus parents often are unable to get an adequate supply of diapers and then miss work or school an average of 4 days per month (National Diaper Bank Network, 2021). Campuses should provide direct access to diapers and baby wipes, or funds to purchase them, such as through food pantries.

Mental Health

Evidence suggests that parenting students face more stressors than nonparents and, as a result, are at greater risk for mental health issues (Ascend & JED Foundation, 2021). Student parents are less likely to use mental health services, or they report feeling misunderstood and mistreated when they do seek support from faculty and staf f(Ascend & JED Foundation, 2021). Campuses can help address these issues by hiring and training mental health counselors with the needs of student parents in mind and by making efforts to improve the awareness and perception of student parents among faculty and staff. Initiatives to help both younger and older student parents feel more at home on campus, including offering physical spaces and targeted programs, could also improve their overall mental health.

Individualized Coaching Services

A critical component of a student parent promise program would be individualized case management, also referred to as coaching. Evidence suggests that intensive coaching can improve outcomes for students whose backgrounds are comparable to student parents' (Evans et al., 2017). Coaching involves a one-on-one relationship with a trained staffperson who helps a student navigate obstacles on- and off-campus. Coaches often help students identify available resources in

the community that can help them meet their basic needs, such as affordable housing or transportation, and help students assess their eligibility and apply for public assistance programs. They may also help students reach campus-based services that can help them overcome academic hurdles or resolve issues with their financial aid.

Coaches in a student parent promise program would need to be trained in the unique experiences and support needs of students with children. They should also be familiar with the types of supportive services that can help these students succeed, including familiarity with scholarship and emergency aid opportunities, public benefit program eligibility requirements for parents in education and training, and the landscapes of available childcare providers and financial assistance sources. Coaches would also be integral to helping student parents find affordable and high-quality childcare options that meet their scheduling and location needs. T hey should also be familiar with intersecting student parent identities (such as veterans, formerly incarcerated parents, single parents, parents with disabilities, and undocumented parents) and the resources available to support their specific needs.

Institutional-Practice Reform

Integral to a student parent promise model would be the creation of inclusive and supportive environments for students who are parenting. The following section describes opportunities and recommendations for reforming institutional practices and campus cultures to promote the well-being and success of student parents.

Transfer Supports

For student parents, transferring to a new institution may mean the loss of campus-based or family support systems, childcare providers, and connections to basic-needs resources. Transfer advisers and orientation staff are often the first point of contact for transfer students and are critical to ensuring a seamless transition in all components of the student parent promise. These staff should be trained on the obstacles that student parents commonly face. They should also have information about access to resources, on- and off-campus, related to basic needs, housing, childcare, and school districts.

Priority Registration

To support student parents' need to schedule classes around their jobs, childcare availability, and K–12 school hours, institutions should give student parents priority for course registration. Priority registration is already a common practice for student athletes and members of the armed forces, whose responsibilities require their presence at fixed times. Prioritizing student parents would allow them greater access to courses that work with their complex schedules.

Flexible Course Options

Flexible course options, such as asynchronous online, hybrid, hyflex, weekend, evening, and short-term classes, can enable student parents to create schedules to accommodate childcare availability, employment, learning preferences, and even the availability of privacy and quiet time for learning in their homes. Because online learning does not resolve childcare concerns, institutions should encourage departments to offer a mix of flexible course options for classes at all levels—general education, electives, and core courses in their major. Institutions should undertake information technology and faculty professional development efforts to accomplish these goals, for example, training in online learning management systems, such as Canvas and Blackboard. Student parents returning to campus after prolonged enrollment breaks should also be provided with learning opportunities.

Nontraditional Hours for Support Services

Academic support services, such as tutoring, writing centers, and advising, operate mostly during regular business hours, which limits access to students who cannot be on campus until the evening or weekend or who are learning fully online. Institutions have begun extending hours for these services into evenings and weekends, and as a result of the pandemic, they have replicated their services online. Campuses should continue to offer these flexible options and to gather student feedback regarding both the days when extended hours are needed and the quality of service provided during the extended

time. They should also work with campus childcare centers to provide caregiving support to student parents' children while accessing these services.

Student Parent-Friendly Classroom and Campus Policies

While institutions of higher education are generally considered to be open to the public, campus and classroom policies that prohibit minors can force student parents to make choices that could jeopardize their academic standing, such as missing class. Classroom policies and procedures should account for the unique needs of student parents by acknowledging parents' caregiving demands and providing alternatives for situations in which, for example, students need to bring a child to campus or make up assignments or tests in the event of a childcare breakdown. Faculty should be supported in creating syllabi that are student parent–friendly, with language that explicitly recognizes student parent identity and is inclusive of resources on campuses that are relevant to student parent needs.

Family-Friendly Campus Spaces

Student parents want institutions to recognize that their children are integral parts of their educational journeys and want more family-friendly physical spaces on campuses (Lindsay & Gillum, 2018). Campus environments can be made welcoming for children and their parents through areas dedicated to student parent families and by displaying student parent families in campus materials. These areas could include child-friendly furniture and play equipment, lockers to hold personal items while families are on campus, convenient parking for students bringing children onto campus, and campus photos and banners depicting pregnant and parenting students.

Title IX Awareness

Title IX is widely associated with campus sexual assault and gender equity in sports. However, both students and faculty are often unaware of the full scope of Title IX protections. Title IX protects students against being penalized for pregnancy-related absences; ensures that they have adequate time to recover from childbirth, miscarriage, or abortion; and requires the provision of alternative assignments or programs, when appropriate (U.S. Department of Education, 2020). The lack of knowledge about Title IX, or the institutional failure to comply, can result in failed classes, incompletes, loss of sports or academic scholarships, high stress, and insufficient time for postpartum recovery for students determined to stay on track with their classes. Campuses should ensure that they have a Title IX coordinator who is committed to supporting pregnant and postpartum students; educating students, faculty, and staff on the pregnancy provisions in Title IX; and advocating for students who submit complaints for Title IX violations.

Priority Campus Employment

Approximately 60% of student parents are employed outside their campus, and student parents who are basic-needs insecure are more likely to be working than those who are basic-needs secure (Goldrick-Rab et al., 2020). Campuses may provide part- and full-time employment opportunities for students through federal work-study programs, as well as providing other work opportunities for students who do not qualify for work-study. Prioritizing student parents for on-campus employment would reduce students' commute time between school and their jobs and ensure that their work schedules accommodate their class schedules.

Student Parent Promise Data Collection

Promise programs serving any population should be designed with strong data collection and evaluation procedures in mind. They should enable assessments of relative outcomes for promise participants compared with similar nonparticipants (if applicable), disaggregate key subpopulations of participants, and facilitate rigorous research to inform future practice.

If programs are expansive enough, as this chapter proposes, then there may not be a comparable population of nonparticipants. There is enough evidence to support a full-scale implementation of a promise along the outlines included here,

but if a funder has limited resources and wishes to improve the research base, then random assignment among potentially eligible students would be the most effective way to generate useful findings. In the absence of random assignment, data from cohorts of potentially promise-eligible students from years prior to implementation of the program could also be used for rigorous quasi-experimental studies. That is one reason data collection should actually begin before a program has been implemented.

Although some of these recommendations would apply to any promise program, a key element of the student parent promise is the potential, if designed correctly, to look at outcomes for both students and their children. Currently, however, most federal, state, and institutional data systems are not well set up for this purpose.

The main source of federal educational data on students who are parents is postsecondary student surveys conducted by the NCES (Gault et al., 2020). Institutions and states are not required to collect information on whether students are parents, leaving a major hole in the ability of higher education practitioners and researchers to understand this student population. Data are especially weak for noncustodial parents, often male, whose children are not "dependents" for financial aid purposes but who may still have expenses and time commitments related to parenting.

Data collection on students' parental status, the age and number of children, and their marital status, alongside data currently collected, such as race, ethnicity, gender, Pell eligibility, and age, could shed important light on the population of students participating in a student parent promise program and their educational outcomes over time. This information could be crucial to informing the improvement of the promise program and would provide critical insight to academic institutions and state higher education systems on how to better serve students who are parents. The information should include qualitative data that seek to explain the experiences of student parents with the program, including any gaps in needed support and areas of improvement that would better facilitate persistence and completion.

In addition, state longitudinal data systems could be strengthened through alignment, so that families represented in multiple systems—as student parent families often are—can be connected where the connection is relevant to understanding outcomes. Understanding when a family is being served by the community and technical college system, TANF, SNAP, workforce development, and CCDBG, for example, could enable those agencies to work together to better serve those families. It could also enable assessment of how a promise program could better leverage those systems to support participating student parents. It would also be helpful to be able to identify the pre-K–12 children of students enrolled in college or university in state data systems. That connection could make possible studies of the impact of a promise program or of college enrollment generally on the educational outcomes of students' children. Some states are starting to improve data collection in this area. Oregon, for example, passed legislation in 2021 adding questions about parental status to its higher education data collection process (Oregon State Legislative, 2021).

Financing the Student Parent Promise

This section reviews possible federal, state, and institutional sources of financial support for the student parent promise model, including considerations of the costs of providing the main components of the promise and fiscally constrained models that can persist despite reduced public resources. A strong, sustainable financing solution for the program would make use of resources from existing programs serving students and parents, accommodate increased utilization as the program succeeds in its goals, and incorporate funding sources that are not likely to go away during times of stress on state and institutional budgets.

Estimating the Cost of the Student Parent Promise

If it works as intended, the student parent promise should result in student parents enrolling in college at higher rates, persisting longer, and taking more classes than they do in a system with inadequate resources. All those intended effects would increase the size and cost, but also the benefits, of the program. It is hard to know how great the effects would be, but estimates based on the current student population can provide a starting point for understanding the potential scale of investment needed.

Cost of Childcare

Student parents with children under 13 years of age constitute the bulk of the student parent population. Based on the authors' analysis of data from the NCES, the 2015–2016 National Postsecondary Student Aid Study, and the Integrated

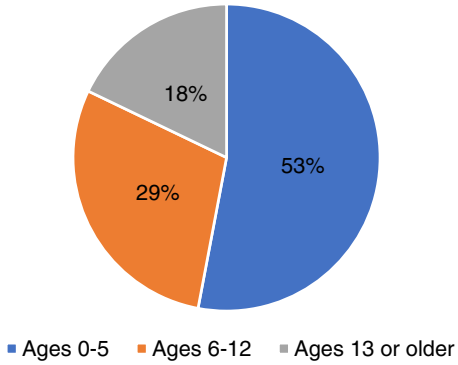

Figure 7.3 Share of undergraduate students with children by age of youngest child, 2015–2016.
Note. Data are from the authors' analysis of data from the U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 2015–2016 National Postsecondary Student Aid Study (U.S. Department of Education, 2019a).

	Price for slots needed	Median cost per slot, all ages (assuming 9 months of care)	Total cost
Childcare need and cost for student parent population at 2015–2016 level ($3.8 million)			
Full-time care	$994,392	$7,700	$7,657,067,688
Part-time care	$719,068	$3,850	$2,996,673,952
Total	$1,713,460	$5,775	$10,425,569,308
Childcare need and cost for student parent population at 2012–2013 level ($4.8 million)			
Full-time care	$1,318,382	$7,700	$10,151,873,413
Part-time care	$850,221	$3,850	$3,273,458,938
Total	$2,168,604	$5,775	$13,425,332,351

Figure 7.4 Estimated need and cost of full- and part-time childcare slots needed by student parents with children under age 13 years, at current levels and with a hypothetical increase in enrolled student parents.
Note. Part-time care is assumed to cost 50% of the cost of full-time care. The median cost of a childcare slot is based on the national median cost of care across age groups and states for which data were available and is prorated for the 9-month academic year. Demand for part- and full-time care is calculated using estimates of the share of single and married student parents with children aged 0–5 and 6–12 years by attendance intensity. Full-time single and full-time married students with a working spouse with children under age 6 years are assumed to need full-time care. Full-time parents of children age 6–12 years and part-time parents of children age 0–5 years are assumed to need part-time care, and parents of children age 6–12 years are assumed not to need care, regardless of marital status. Married parents with a spouse out of the workforce are not counted as needing care. Data are from the appendixes of *The U.S. and the High Price of Child Care* (Child Care Aware of America, 2019) and the authors' analysis of data from the 2015–2016 National Postsecondary Student Aid Study (U.S. Department of Education, 2019a), and the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System.

Postsecondary Education Data System, 82% of students with children—roughly 3.1 million people—are parents or caregivers to children from infancy through age 12 years (53% have children ages 0–5 years, and 29% have children ages 6–12 years; see Figure 7.3). Based on a combination of age and number of children, attendance intensity, and marital status, currently enrolled student parents with children under age 13 years are in need of an estimated 1.7 million full- and part-time childcare slots.[29]

According to an analysis of 2018 childcare costs from Child care Aware of America (2018; the most recent available), the national median annual cost of center-based childcare across age groups is $10,267; prorating to the 9-month academic year brings this amount to $7,700 (see Figure 7.4). Further adjusting for the cost of part-time care, assuming a part-time slot will cost half of what a full-time slot costs, brings the prorated total cost of a slot to $5,775 a year. The total cost of covering student parents' estimated childcare needs, therefore, amounts to roughly $10.4 billion.

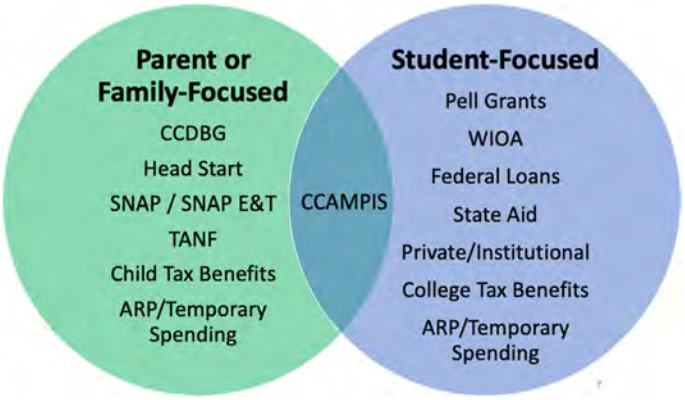

Figure 7.5 Although most funding sources are not directly focused on serving the needs of students with children, many can be leveraged to support them.
Note. ARP = American Rescue Plan; CCDBG = Child Care Development Block Grant; SNAP/SNAP E&T = Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program/Education and Training; WIOA = Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act.

This estimate of the total cost would increase if more student parents were encouraged to enter college as a result of expanded promise program services. Using the most recent high-water mark for student parent enrollment—0.8 million students with children under age 13 years enrolled in academic year 2011–2012—as a benchmark for the potential increase in enrollment, an estimated 2.2 million full- and part-time slots would be needed, bringing the total cost of meeting those childcare needs to $13.4 billion (see Figure 7.4; Gault et al., 2014).

In the case of a more constrained environment where both the supply of services and level of funding necessary to guarantee free or low-cost childcare to all participating student parents with children under age 13 years are not available, the promise program should ensure that student parents with the greatest unmet financial and childcare needs are served first. Nearly 2 million student parents have children under age 13 years and live with incomes below 150% of the federal poverty threshold.[30] These parents would need roughly 881,000 full- and part-time childcare slots. At this level of demand, the total cost of meeting the childcare needs of student parents with children under age 13 years and living below 150% of the federal poverty line would come to $5.1 billion, or about half of what it would cost to meet the full needs of enrolled student parents as of 2015–2016 (see Figure 7.4).

Costs of Wraparound Supports

While specific components (e.g., health care, housing) are difficult to estimate, the overall potential scale of a program to support student parents with expenses beyond those incurred by students without children can be estimated based on the gap between the unmet needs of nonstudent parents and that of student parents. The Georgetown Center on Poverty and Inequality recently estimated that older students with dependents have about $5,900 in additional expenses other than tuition in excess of what students without dependents face (Palacios et al., 2021). Multiplied by the estimated number of low-income student parents based on Pell eligibility (87%, or about 3.3 million students), this would mean about $20 billion in hard-to-manage additional expenses nationally for student parents.[31]

Current Federal Sources of Financing

Many federally funded programs support parents (e.g., Head Start, SNAP, tax credits), and many others support students (e.g., Pell Grants, state financial aid, tax credits). Relatively few target student parents specifically (see Figure 7.5), with the notable exception of the small but potentially scalable CCAMPIS program. To the extent programs currently serve student parents as a subset of their eligible populations, those resources are already part of the overall investment needed for a fully funded promise model. Although we do not propose that student parents be prioritized within these programs at the expense of other eligible participants who also need them, we do support efforts to add funding or redesign program elements that would result in a more complete and coherent investment or would make it easier for student parents to benefit.

The federal government is the key funder for most of these programs, as it likely would need to be for additional investments in a sustainable student parent promise. In many cases, federal programs that can be used to support student parents and their children are implemented at the state or local level and with broad flexibility for implementation. Aligning these programs to support the student parent promise program would allow it to leverage existing funding and program infrastructure to more efficiently provide childcare and wraparound services to participating student parents. A range of federal programs could contribute to the administration and delivery of services and childcare assistance to parents participating in the student parent promise. The majority of these programs are focused on serving either families/parents or college students (see Figure 7.5).

Existing Student Parent–Focused Investment

The CCAMPIS program, with just $55 million in annual funding, is the only federal funding source devoted to supporting low-income students' access to subsidized childcare (GAO, 2019). Administered by the U.S. Department of Education, CCAMPIS is a competitive grant program awarded to institutions to provide on-campus services or to contract with eligible, high-quality off-campus childcare providers to serve Pell-eligible student parents. A student parent promise program could collaborate with CCAMPIS in the delivery and funding of childcare services if CCAMPIS were funded at a level to support it (perhaps at 20–50 times its current level). CCAMPIS could also be involved with supporting the increase in supply of high-quality campus-based childcare available to student parent families, though much of the work to increase the supply of high-quality childcare more broadly would need to be conducted under the auspices of the Child Care Development Fund.

Parent- or Family-Focused Investments

Head Start

Nearly half (46%) of college students who are parents of children under age 6 years meet the income-eligibility requirements for Head Start (below 100% of the federal poverty line), which was funded at $10.8 billion in fiscal year 2021 (Gault, Cruse, et al., 2019). Head Start, which provides high-quality early childhood education to children and individualized wraparound coaching and supports to parents, could serve as a prime partner for supporting eligible student parent families. According to a 2019 study, more than 60 Head Start–college partnerships were serving eligible student parents and their children (Gault, Cruse, et al., 2019); these partnerships could be scaled to new communities to increase services for student parent promise participants.

Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program

SNAP, which was funded at $70 billion in fiscal year 2021, primarily helps low-income recipients, including some student parents, purchase food. A component of the program, the SNAP Employment and Training (E&T) Program, provides additional services to students eligible for SNAP, and it can include tuition, books, childcare, transportation, and other resources. State programs with robust SNAP E&T efforts include Washington State's Basic Food, Employment, and Training (BFET) program (Washington State Department of Social and Health Services, n.d.) and the Hawai'i Nutrition Employment and Training (HINET, 2021) program.

Temporary Assistance for Needy Families

The TANF program, funded at $15.7 billion in fiscal year 2021, provides federal block grants to states to support programs for low-income families, including some student parents. Funds can be leveraged to support state programs that provide services for students. For example, Maine's Higher Opportunity for Pathways to Employment (HOPE) program helps eligible parents with low incomes cover costs related to education and training, including tuition and fees, as well as nontuition costs like childcare and transportation. Similar programs include Hawai'i's Bridge to Hope program, Pennsylvania's Keystone Education Yields Success program (Pennsylvania Department of Human Services, 2021), and the Arkansas Career Pathways Initiative (2020).

Childcare Development Block Grant

The Childcare Development Block Grant (CCDBG) program, which was funded at $5.9 billion in fiscal year 2021 and was significantly but temporarily expanded through the pandemic stimulus packages, supports programs to improve access to high-quality childcare. States could commit to using CCDBG funds to establish contracts with campus childcare providers and/or devote a portion of the block grant to flow through campus childcare centers to improve the supply of subsidized care to eligible low-income students with children. New York State, for example, devotes a small portion of its CCDBG funding to the State University of New York (SUNY) and CUNY to offset some of the cost of campus childcare for eligible student parents (New York State Office of Children and Family Services, 2020).

Student-Focused Investments

Federal Pell Grants

Pell Grants are by far the largest source of financial aid for low-income students, including student parents. More than $28 billion were awarded in academic year 2019–2020 (National Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators, 2021). With a maximum award of $6,495, most Pell Grants at 4-year colleges go toward tuition and fees, but at colleges where tuition is lower than that (mostly community colleges), students can use the balance toward nontuition expenses. Doubling the maximum award to $13,000 would significantly benefit student parents, as would more targeted changes focused on the highest-need students.

Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act

The federal government provided about $3.6 billion in Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) funding in fiscal year 2021. State and local governments have considerable discretion in administering the funds. State and local workforce development boards partner with community colleges to offer programs that qualify for WIOA support. Governors can also use state funds to align local employers' needs with the services of education providers, including using WIOA funds to support childcare access for eligible parents in education and training.

Tax Credits

Increasingly, the federal and state governments use tax credits and other incentives in the place of grant programs to fund their priorities. The $70 billion cost of child tax credits in 2020 is comparable to the size of the SNAP program and will be much larger with the temporary enhancements from COVID-19-related stimulus funding. Some percentage of this funding benefits student parents, and the temporary increase will put a significant (if short-term) dent in their unmet need.

On the education side, tax credits like the American Opportunity Tax Credit are second only to Pell Grants in the amount of federal support they offer for the cost of education, with $10.7 billion estimated in 2020 according to the U.S. Department of the Treasury & Office of Tax Analysis (2021).

One challenge student parents can encounter in this area is understanding which tax credits they are eligible for and how those credits interact with one another and with state and federal financial aid programs, such as Pell Grants. Even federal policy makers and agencies may not understand how their programs interact with one another. Better coordination and communication among all parties and about processes and procedures could improve student parents' access to these benefits.

State and Local Government Roles in Funding

The vulnerability of state budgets to economic downturns means that they are not the best source for sustainable operational funding, especially when participation in programs like a student parent promise often grows during recessions. Local property taxes, which are less susceptible to downturns, sometimes fund community colleges, and they could help balance out the economic cycle in certain locations. But that is not yet a major funding source in most states. Even where it exists, lower-wealth communities do not have access to the same property tax revenue as high-wealth locations, undermining the suitability of the funding source as a support for low-income student parents.

There are, however, important roles for state and local governments to play. States, in addition to building capacity within existing agencies to provide key services to student parent families, may need to make regulatory changes to streamline student parent access.

State higher education governing bodies can partner with the administering agencies of safety net programs, such as TANF and CCDBG, to make these programs as accessible as possible for student parents by ensuring that state-imposed eligibility requirements do not unnecessarily preclude student parents from accessing them. They can also use that funding to develop innovative programs, including those illustrated in the following paragraphs, to support the student parent promise.

Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning and Technical College System of Georgia

In 2016, the National Governors Association awarded Georgia the Parents and Children Thriving Together (PACTT) grant. Through the PACTT grant, the Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning and the Technical College System of Georgia developed a partnership to support student parents and their children through an alignment of early childhood and postsecondary education. This partnership has continued to grow through shared convenings and cross-agency training of frontline staff that engage student parents so they can share about supports, such as state financial aid or childcare subsidy.

New York State Family Empowerment Community College Pilot Program

Then governor Andrew Cuomo of New York launched a pilot program in 2019 providing customized supports for single parents attending participating SUNY and CUNY community college campuses (State of New York, 2019). This innovative program was designed to support up to 400 parents a year for 3 years. Participants receive on-campus childcare; intensive personalized advisement; and educational supports, including tutoring, career counseling, and specific assistance in transitioning to a 4-year school. The funding for this program was approved in the enacted 2020 budget, and CUNY received $2 million of the allocation to implement the project; SUNY received $3 million. Within CUNY, community colleges were invited to submit proposals, and four campuses were chosen to participate in CUNY's Family Empowerment Project. Each of the four campuses proposed a comprehensive approach to support single student parents.

Tennessee Navigators and Quick Screener

In addition to the Tennessee Reconnect Grant—the state's adult promise program—Tennessee provides adult students with institution-neutral college navigation services through the Navigate Reconnect program. It pays special attention to the needs of student parents, including training for Reconnect Navigators and college staff across the state on the unique needs of student parents. The screening tool screens students for eligibility for two programs that include childcare assistance: TANF and Smart Steps, the state's CCDBG program.

Other Sources of State Funding

In addition, there may be possibilities for direct state financial support for childcare and wraparound services for student parent promise participants. For example, state childcare and early learning programs could serve as conduits for funding and additional services provided to student parents and on college campuses. State prekindergarten programs, such as Washington State's Early Childhood Education and Assistance program and Oregon's Baby Promise (Washington State Department of Children, n.d.; Oregon Department of Early Learning Division, 2017), could be enhanced to serve eligible student parents and build supply and quality of care on college campuses.

Capital Funding

One area in which states may be best able to contribute is in capital funding for childcare centers or other one-time or short-term startup costs. Since these do not involve recurring funds, they are less vulnerable to cuts in the event of recession and would help institutions serve student parents.

Institutional Role in Funding

Few institutions have sufficient independent resources to fund programs for student parents. Those that do should certainly consider doing so (e.g., where endowment funding per student is high). Others may want to incorporate student parent funding into their development campaigns.

Yet even if institutions will not be primarily responsible for funding the student parent promise, they must be actively involved in its implementation and, in some cases, contribute institutional resources. Many institutions with campus childcare centers, for example, support those centers through both financial and in-kind contributions (Boressoff, 2013). Financial contributions can originate from student government funds or student fees, as well as institutional funds, while in-kind support often takes the form of physical space, utilities, maintenance services, groundskeeping, staff lines, and other support.

Participating institutions with existing campus childcare centers would commit to sustaining a certain level of combined financial and in-kind support for those centers' operations, in addition to facilitating partnerships with community and state programs that would enable expanded availability of community- and campus-based care. For example, institutions could develop partnerships with Head Start grantees to provide services to eligible student parent families on college campuses, at local off-campus programs, or with local family childcare home networks that can set aside slots for the children of students (Gault, Cruse, et al., 2019). The University of Michigan's Campus Childcare Homes Network is an example (Human Resources, University of Michigan, 2015).

Conclusion

This chapter has outlined the significant resources being deployed to serve students and parents, but it has also pointed out the ways in which those investments remain insufficient and poorly coordinated with potential partners and beneficiaries. Included in the three pandemic-related stimulus bills enacted by the Trump and Biden administrations have been many billions of dollars in supplemental funding for the programs and tax credits outlined herein, especially for the CCDBG, Head Start, and SNAP programs, as well as the child tax credit. Funding to support higher education institutions directly in times of fiscal distress was also included, some of which most likely went to help student parents. In the short term, the supplemental funds will directly or indirectly address some of the needs outlined in this chapter, but in the long term, we will need a more coordinated and sustainable approach. Such an approach will only be possible with improved and ongoing communication among students, advocates, experts, and policy makers in the overlapping domains that form the "ecosystem" for a meaningful student parent promise.

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8. Expanding Promise Draft Design: Students Needing Academic Support

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Upon entering college, many students face challenges, such as navigating a complex environment with new requirements, balancing school with family and/or work obligations, and making sure they are adequately academically prepared for college-level work. Before beginning coursework, students are typically required to take a series of assessments to gauge their academic preparation. Often referred to as placement tests, these assessments seek to indicate the level of coursework for which students are prepared. Between academic years 2011 – 2012 and 2016 – 2017, nearly 60% of students at public 2-year institutions and 32% of students at public 4-year institutions needed remedial coursework because they lacked academic preparedness for college-level work (Taylor et al., 2020).[32] Contributing to this high enrollment in developmental education is the lack of alignment between the K – 12 and higher education systems (Balfanz, 2009; Barnes et al., 2010; Melguizo & Ngo, 2020); poor academic advising (Bahr, 2008); and a lack of social and academic support (Bahr, 2010), which can increase the cost of college and become a financial burden for students who are academically underprepared (Bailey, 2009b; Bailey & Cho, 2010). Students who face academic challenges or who are academically underprepared have disproportionately higher tuition costs due to spending more time in college (Melguizo et al., 2008), contributing to a cycle that makes it all the more challenging for them to succeed.

It is a deeply unfortunate irony that developmental education programs produce decidedly mixed results (Valentine et al., 2017). While developmental education programs are designed to improve students' academic preparation for college-level, credit-bearing coursework in math, reading, and writing, only 20% of students who complete developmental coursework go on to enroll in the next college-level courses within 2 years (Complete College America, 2016). The cost of developmental education is a major topic of scrutiny, particularly given questions on its effectiveness (Bailey et al., 2013). Credits in developmental education account for nearly 10% of all credits earned at community colleges nationwide, costing an estimated $4 billion per year (Scott-Clayton & Rodriguez, 2015). Furthermore, taxpayers contribute an estimated $7 million per year in the form of loans and grants to cover costs related to developmental education (Carter, 2017). Inconsistent evidence of effectiveness and high costs of developmental education have led to institutions increasingly making the coursework optional.

Low-income and minority students enroll in remedial courses at disproportionate rates compared with their more affluent and White counterparts, many of whom may have been successful in college-level, credit-bearing coursework (Bailey & Jaggars, 2016). For students who began college in the 2011 – 2012 academic year, 63% of Hispanic students and 67% of African American students at public 2-year colleges took remedial coursework by the 2016 – 2017 academic year, compared with 54% of White students (Taylor et al., 2020). At public 4-year universities, 41% of Hispanic students and 39% of African American students took remedial coursework, compared with 28% of White students (Taylor et al., 2020). This greater enrollment in remedial coursework by minority students is an outcome of the function of sorting in education, commonly referred to as tracking, which reinforces race- and class-based inequities (Stich, 2018). While tracking is usually studied in K – 12 systems, the increasing stratification in postsecondary schools is evidence of the movement of the tracking phenomenon into higher education (Stich, 2018). For example, in higher education, there is a hierarchy of institutional types, which has implications for student access to education. While developmental education has been legitimized as a pathway for academically underprepared students to remediate skills necessary to succeed in college-level coursework, this coursework sorts students with particular backgrounds and identities into "separate and unequal tracks" (Stich, 2018, p. 2).

For students who enter college needing to take one or more remedial courses, coursework may be delivered in a variety of formats or modalities. Many modalities seek to accelerate remedial coursework, an approach that reduces the likelihood that students exit higher education before completing their developmental sequence (Bailey & Jaggars, 2016). Accelerated coursework, sometimes referred to as compressed, typically allows students to complete courses in a time frame shorter

than the average 16-week semester, enabling students to spend less time on developmental coursework. These courses may also be module based, in which students complete only those modules related to their specific gaps in knowledge or areas of weakness (Park-Gaghan et al., 2020). An alternative approach, known as contextualized coursework, aligns with courses students take in their given academic programs or with real-life scenarios (Rutschow & Diamond, 2015), for example, students in health programs may learn how to calculate body mass index. Corequisite coursework is taken simultaneously with credit-bearing coursework to supplement content being learned in college-level courses, and higher success rates have been reported for students receiving corequisite instruction (Denley, 2015; Hayward & Willett, 2014; Logue et al., 2019; Miller et al., 2020). Individual institutions may choose to deliver courses via one or multiple modalities, depending on the subject area, faculty and/or student preferences, and legislative requirements.

System- and statewide reforms of developmental education have been undertaken in several states over the last decade, including California, Colorado, Florida, Georgia, Indiana, New York, North Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, and West Virginia. Senate Bill 1720 initiated statewide developmental education reform in 2013, requiring implementation at all 28 of the public community and state colleges in the Florida College System. The rationale for this change was the 2011 Florida House Bill 1,255 that made college placement testing mandatory for most 11th graders. Remedial needs would then be addressed in their senior year. Beginning in fall 2014, institutions could no longer require placement tests of active-duty military personnel or students who graduated from a public Florida high school in 2007 or later. Students who did not meet these exemption criteria were required to earn minimum scores on an approved placement test (e.g., ACT, SAT, Accu-Placer, Postsecondary Educational Readiness Test) or enroll in developmental education coursework. Another example of reform comes from the state of California, where Assembly Bill 705 directed community colleges to "increase the number of students entering and completing transfer-level English and math" (Melguizo, Ching, et al., 2021, p. 2). This reform has resulted in the removal of developmental education coursework, changes to instructional modalities, alternative math pathways, and the use of multiple measures in placing students (Melguizo, Ching, et al., 2021).

College promise programs, of course, constitute another policy movement relevant to this population of students. College promise programs seek to lower or remove the barrier to postsecondary education by funding college tuition and fees (Millett et al., 2018). While reducing the cost of college is crucial, removing or lessening the financial burden as a single approach is not sufficient for improving college completion (Deming, 2017). Instead, researchers suggest that persistence to graduation is improved when promise programs design and implement student support services (Ratledge et al., 2019). When considering the supports necessary to assist students needing academic support in general, we encourage promise programs to include and fund support services for this population.

Consistent with the insights, data analyses, and literature reviews here, we recommend the following strategies to improve developmental education, beginning with reforms of assessments and placement mechanisms. In making recommendations, we consider the increasingly diverse population of students who will have access to postsecondary education as a result of college promise programs. We emphasize that removing the financial barrier to attending college is important; however, we implore institutions to consider how prepared they are to respond to this increasingly diverse population of students and what adaptations may be necessary to best serve these students. We also encourage broader promise programs to consider how they enable institutions to initiate and sustain these programs and services. Next, we review the necessary reforms to institutional and course structures and sequences, followed by an emphasis on high-quality instruction and course content. Finally, we suggest reforms to student support services in the form of supplemental coursework, instruction, and tutoring and considerations around guided pathways and wraparound student support models.

Strategies

Placement Testing

Issue/Scenario

Placement tests are often a focal point of legislative reform for developmental education. An overreliance on such tests has led to students being inappropriately placed into lower levels of coursework when they could be successful in college-level courses (Belfield & Crosta, 2012; Scott-Clayton, 2012). For example, students may not meet the minimum cut score to be deemed "academically prepared" for college-level coursework by one point and, as a result, are required to take one or more remedial courses. Moreover, students may not have known that the college they elect to attend will require them to take a placement test, nor might students be aware of the consequences of not passing the test (Sole, 2020). The

implications that placement into lower levels of coursework has for students include spending more time in college and, ultimately, more money on tuition, which students may not be able to afford.

While students can take the test again (Barnett et al., 2018), doing so may present logistic and financial challenges. Placement tests may require a fee and also come at a cost to students in the form of time (i.e., time spent commuting to a testing site and preparing for a test; Rodríguez et al., 2015), which not all students can afford.

Recommendation

We recommend replacing placement tests with multiple measures to determine academic preparation (for an example, see Bahr et al., 2019). Multiple measures typically include students' high school GPA and previous standardized tests, if any (Barnett et al., 2020), and may also include grades in selected high school coursework and noncognitive measures. If placement tests are still required, institutions should consider providing eligible students with fee waivers or connecting students to resources such as Better Future Forward to cover expenses. If an institution requires placement tests, it could consider offering high school teachers and counselors the opportunity to attend information sessions that describe the test and placement policies. Teachers and counselors in turn could share this information with students and then work with them to prepare for the tests.

Rationale

In states like Florida, where placement tests are now optional, quantitative findings have revealed the following: decreased enrollment in developmental coursework; increased enrollment in introductory college-level courses; and more students taking and passing introductory college-level English and math courses, with even greater increases for African American and Hispanic students compared with White students (Park-Gaghan et al., 2020). In fact, in light of the COVID-19 pandemic, many institutions had no choice but to use multiple measures to assess and place students into coursework because in-person testing was no longer possible (Bickerstaff et al., 2021). In addition, negative stereotypes could contribute to the gender and race performance gaps on high-stakes tests (Sole, 2019). Therefore we believe multiple measures are a more equitable way to assess students. The Center for the Analysis of Postsecondary Readiness offers examples of how institutions have implemented multiple measures for placement (Barnett et al., 2018).

Intake/Onboarding/Orientation

Issue/Scenario

Orientation typically occurs as students enter institutions and may include advising, course placement, and broader information sharing about institutional requirements and resources. Orientation may occur in person or online. However, not all institutions require this type of onboarding for new students. Instead of orientation, some institutions may require students to enroll in so-called student-success courses designed to teach noncognitive skills, such as time management, note-taking, goal setting, studying, major selection, and résumé writing (Hatch et al., 2018).

Recommendation

Instead of requiring students to complete student-success courses, we recommend that institutions implement a robust preenrollment onboarding/orientation that teaches successful habits, provides an overview of major-specific and institutional requirements, and emphasizes the college's commitment to providing support services. Precollege orientation programs can remove barriers to student success. For example, a brief, 4-day orientation could (a) connect students with the resources to meet their financial needs, (b) refine students' time-management skills to help them transition from a structured high school schedule to college classes that meet in person for fewer hours but require more work outside of class, (c) introduce and destigmatize support services to show how reaching out for support can promote academic success, and (d) build a sense of community among peers. These connections can be established by having small cohorts complete all orientation activities together and each day have an icebreaker and a few bonding activities.

Rationale

Mixed findings on the effectiveness of student-success courses suggest that requiring these courses may not always be in students' best interests (Permzadian & Credé, 2016), as they do not support all students' long-term goals and sometimes erroneously communicate that some or all students enter college underprepared (Lane & Miller, 2019). These courses might also be noncredit bearing; deplete students' time and money; and, even if credit bearing, not be accepted by transfer institutions.

Academic Support Services

Issue/Scenario

As developmental education increasingly becomes optional, institutions may anticipate more students coming to college with academic needs that should be addressed. However, despite the multitude of academic support services institutions provide, many students are only briefly introduced to services in course syllabi and then, if they are not performing well, by early-alert flags. Students seeking academic support services may also feel stigmatized. This is especially true for students from historically underrepresented groups (Winograd & Rust, 2014). This is important, considering the correlation between academic self-efficacy and academic performance (Honicke & Broadbent, 2016).

Recommendation

Alter the introduction to academic support services to ensure services are destigmatized and associated with a growth mind-set and success-oriented perspective. Consider creating comprehensive college transition programs that support underserved students academically and socially as they transition to college, helping to ensure academically validating experiences (Hallett et al., 2019). These programs have been shown to encourage a sense of belonging (Baber, 2018), develop students' self-efficacy (Kezar & Kitchen, 2019), and bolster students' confidence in their academic potential (Hallett et al., 2019) at both the community college and university levels.

Other efforts may include increased one-on-one and small-group tutoring, expanding and integrating academic learning labs and centers, and embedding peer tutors and librarians. One-time or regular programming, such as boot camps, faculty office hours in learning labs and centers, and online support services, may further promote students' classroom success. Additionally, referrals for academic support should be integrated with nonacademic support networks (also referred to as wraparound services) for students who may need support for such nonacademic challenges as food insecurity, unavailable housing, and unavailable childcare (Scrivener et al., 2015).

Rationale

Academic struggles may arise in response to academic underpreparedness and/or nonacademic challenges. Expanding available services and outreach networks in response to academic referrals may help ensure student success. Surveying student needs as recommended by Goldrick-Rab, Richardson, Schneider, et al. (2018) also enables institutions to offer relevant services in the first place or to proactively develop a network of supports.

Modalities

Issue/Scenario

Students placed into or needing developmental education may spend critical time and money on developmental course sequences before enrolling in college-level classes, and many students fail to complete such sequences (Bailey & Cho, 2010). Alternative pathways with embedded remediation have benefits but often span two semesters (Sole, 2020) or need to meet for a larger-than-typical number of hours per week.

Recommendation

We recommend that institutions follow corequisite developmental education models. These models eliminate the requirement that students complete developmental work in a separate term *before* taking college-level courses. Instead, students

should be enrolled directly in introductory college-level courses while also being provided with developmental education support *in the same term* through corequisite developmental education. Studies have found that corequisite models have been associated with gains of 10 percentage points or more in the likelihood of success in gateway courses in math or English in the first year relative to traditional developmental education models (Cho et al., 2012; Denley, 2015; Logue et al., 2019; Miller et al., 2020; Ran & Lin, 2019).

Rationale

The large time commitment of traditional college-level courses with embedded remediation makes remediation challenging to schedule with other courses and, if not successfully completed, leads students to stop out or drop out of college with student loan debt and no credential, widening already large attainment gaps by race, gender, and socioeconomic status (Sole, 2020). Moreover, Sole, in a study of students who took a streamlined statistics pathway (one semester) versus a two-semester course with embedded remedial support, found that students deemed nonproficient with strong high school GPAs performed better than students deemed proficient. This suggests that yearlong remedial sequences or courses may not be necessary for success among students who are on the border of being deemed proficient.

Guided Pathways for Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics Versus Non-Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics Majors

Issue/Scenario

Students who do not need developmental education may be appropriately placed into college-level courses, including a traditional course sequence that prepares them for college algebra. However, this course sequence may not be aligned with their major or career aspirations (Florida Student Success Center, 2019; Sole, 2020). For example, students who are not interested in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM)-related majors may be better served by taking alternative math courses.

Recommendation

Provide alternate guided pathways for students who may not need traditional course sequences that prepare them for algebra-based pathways. These alternate pathways may include courses in quantitative reasoning, statistics, or financial literacy (American Mathematical Association of Two-Year Colleges, 2014; Florida Student Success Center, 2019; Sole, 2020).

Rationale

Alternate math pathways may help students complete graduation requirements in a timely manner (Sole, 2020). Researchers have found benefits to these alternate pathways, including higher graduation rates among students who completed statistics instead of elementary algebra at 2-year colleges (Logue et al., 2019).

Professional Development and Training

Issue/Scenario

As developmental education becomes less frequently required, more students who are viewed as academically underprepared enroll in college-level courses in which they may or may not perform well. Qualitative data on developmental education reform in Florida deepened researchers' insight into faculty members' opinions about professional development opportunities in these situations. As one instructor explained, "if students are going to skip dev-ed [*sic*] courses, we need that training for gateway courses," such as college-level course options or academic and career advising (Hu et al., 2021, p. 43).

Recommendation

Provide training in professional development for faculty teaching gateway college-level courses, who may experience an increase in students who have bypassed developmental education and are thought by the institution to be academically

underprepared. Put differently, students who did not achieve minimum scores on standardized tests may choose to opt out of developmental education and instead enter college-level courses. These students have shown the ability to pass college-level courses (Belfield & Crosta, 2012; Scott-Clayton, 2012); however, supplementary support may be necessary to help them succeed. Thus additional training may be beneficial for faculty when teaching courses with a variety of student skill levels. Training could also be expanded to include college advisers, admissions staff, and high school staff, who are also helping to support students through the shifting policies and practices on developmental education. As alternative guided pathways for STEM and non-STEM majors become more widespread, conduct information sessions for college advisers to ensure students select the pathways consistent with the requirements of their intended majors.

Rationale

Traditional developmental education faculty have been steeped in a "pedagogy of preparation" in which they demystify the academic and social experience of college, support students in and out of class, and demonstrate a heightened ethic of care for students as individuals under their guidance (Brower, Nix, et al., 2021). These faculty may approach teaching and learning slightly differently than college-level faculty do. As more students who are thought to be academically unprepared start college in college-level courses, faculty teaching credit-bearing courses may need to incorporate some of the approaches used by developmental education faculty. This might include training in how to modify their teaching styles and to engage with students to maintain and improve student success. Improved student success as a result of strengthened pedagogy may lead to lower achievement gaps.

Collaboration and Communication

Issue/Scenario

In implementing changes or legislative reforms, institutions may be "siloed" or isolated from one another and thus miss opportunities to collaborate and learn from one another on common issues and challenges. This can lead to a duplication of efforts, unnecessary funds spent on ineffective practices, and/or reinventing the wheel (Goudas & Boylan, 2012).

Recommendation

Foster collaboration and communication across departments, across institutions, and within college systems through comprehensive and integrated programs (Kezar & Kitchen, 2019). This collaboration and communication can even be extended to colleges' surrounding communities and local K–12 institutions, and it may include regularly held meetings, data sharing, and training.

High schools and colleges may collaborate on implementing transitional coursework to increase college readiness (Barnett, 2018; Mokher & Jacobson, 2021). Examples of this include work from the Education Systems Center in implementing Illinois's Postsecondary and Workforce Readiness Act and the statewide Florida College and Career Readiness Initiative.

Rationale

While collaboration and communication may seem like obvious organizational functions, institutions do not always follow through. Collaboration and communication can advance, implement, and foster the success of change when implementing legislation, institutional policy, and classroom practice, in part by developing synergy among individuals and teams. Throughout developmental education reform implementation in Florida, collaboration has proved to be beneficial to faculty and staff (Brower, Nix, et al., 2021; Hu et al., 2021).

Critical Impediments to Improving Educational Success

We identified the following critical impediments to improving educational success: student labeling, placement testing, and faculty and adviser gatekeepers. First, data show that students labeled "academically underprepared" who bypass developmental education and enroll in college-level coursework have been successful, despite their perceived academic deficits. With that, we raise the question whether these students are truly academically underprepared. We also question

the prevailing ideas regarding accurate measures of academic preparation. In doing so, we suggest removing the impediment of placement testing, as data in Florida show that the number of students enrolling in and successfully completing college-level coursework has improved after placement tests became elective (Park-Gaghan et al., 2020).

The Role of Data and Assessment

The collection and analysis of data can play a critical role in defining the issues and informing the solutions for students needing academic support. Although a significant amount of research has been conducted on developmental education, we acknowledge that we still have more to learn about the diversity of students and their experiences and about the effects of various changes in developmental education policies and practices. Institutions and systems have a role in continuing to explore the specific needs of this student population. Surveys can be developed and coordinated across institutions to better understand their needs. For instance, institutions may consider assessing basic-needs insecurity among their students and how that affects academic readiness and performance (Goldrick-Rab, Richardson, & Kinsley, 2018).

Institutions and systems also have a role in ensuring that consistent forms of administrative data on developmental education participation and outcomes are collected and stored in a sustainable data infrastructure. Many alternative approaches to noncredit developmental coursework are developed and managed outside of traditional academic departments or structures, and data are sometimes not collected in ways consistent with traditional course enrollment. National and state reporting requirements, such as data points requested of the Integrated Postsecondary Education System (IPEDS), do not necessarily emphasize the collection and reporting of noncredit courses and programs or metrics important to evaluating developmental education. For all issues and recommendations outlined in this chapter, investment will need to be made in data management practices that facilitate rigorous evaluation and research, including the ability to link data across developmental educational programs/courses with students' secondary and postsecondary records.

Given the complexity of developmental education models and reform efforts, we also highlight the importance of systematic assessment and the need for a framework to evaluate the outcomes of students needing academic support. CUNY, for instance, has developed a robust evaluation agenda for its developmental education programs and has partnered with organizations to comprehensively evaluate the implementation and outcomes of one such effort, the CUNY Start program (Cormier & Bickerstaff, 2020; Weiss et al., 2021). These assessment partnerships can serve as models for ongoing assessments at the institution and system levels that can inform policy making.

Costs and Other Financial Considerations

For institutions, college systems, and policy makers to meaningfully engage with the issues and recommendations presented in this chapter, it is important to understand the costs of developmental education to institutions, students, and taxpayers. Without information on the costs and benefits of proposals like multiple measures and enhanced student supports, interested parties will not be able to determine the consequences of these proposals or understand the true burden transitional developmental education places on students (Rodríguez et al., 2015). We also acknowledge that many of the true costs are still unknown, and additional cost–benefit analyses, taking into account costs, revenues, net revenues, and efficiency levels, are needed to fully understand the financial implications of developmental education.

Considerations for Institutional Costs

Overall costs for institutions may be difficult to calculate, especially considering the diversity of programs and students who fall into the broad category of developmental education. The following aspects of developmental education would need to be considered.

Placement Testing

In their analysis of the cost to colleges and students of remedial placement testing, Rodríguez et al. (2015) found that colleges finance approximately 60% of the total social cost[33] (both internal and external costs), with students bearing the remainder in the form of time spent on testing and related activities. Of the college costs, three-quarters are for personnel (proctors, administrative staff, etc.). Other expenses related to testing include computers and space/overhead for testing centers.

Training

Reforms like multiple measures or guided pathway efforts require significant training and support for admissions and enrollment management staff, including students' advisers. The cost of this training will come in the form of time taken away from other important tasks.

Data Systems

The development of new data systems and linkages to support multiple measures, for example, requires financial and time investments. Significant costs may be associated with the development of infrastructure to support data collection and management needed for operational and assessment purposes.

Collaboration

Collaborative efforts involving stakeholders from across higher education institutions and K–12 systems involve costs related to personnel and opportunity. The long-term costs of noncollaboration, however, are even greater, given that higher education institutions must provide academic supports to students who could have benefited from transitional coursework while in high school (Barnett, 2018).

Costs Per Completion Versus Enrollment

The cost of developmental education is often calculated per student (see Pretlow III & Wathington, 2012), but there might be value in comparing the costs of remedial education per student with the costs per graduate. At an institutional level, schools may consider calculating the return on the investment of developmental education based on the milestones students achieve, as students who enroll in developmental education and eventually graduate contribute to the institution in the form of fees, funding allocations, and incentives from performance-based initiatives (Gallard et al., 2010).

Comprehensive Cost Accounting in K–12 and Postsecondary Systems

True accounting of the costs of developmental education must also consider the costs to taxpayers of students repeating K–12 content in college. Indeed, these costs may be rising, albeit temporarily, as recent reports indicate that COVID-19-induced distance learning in high school "has resulted in a significant increase in failure rates among a host of good to excellent students" (Fulton, 2021 Increasing Failure Rates section).

Cost Savings

Developmental education reforms often produce cost savings, which must be considered. For instance, colleges that are replacing semester-long student-success courses with 1-week robust onboarding would pay less to run those courses. We recognize that by eliminating student-success courses, colleges will lose revenue. However, this lost revenue is outweighed by the cost savings inherent in improving gateway course completion among students that is enabled by developmental education reform. A recent study by Mokher et al. (2021) found cost savings in the form of fewer pregateway courses being attempted by students and fewer students repeating gateway courses. Replacing semester-long student-success courses with robust preenrollment orientation programs may provide schools with the opportunity to make up a portion of the revenue lost by not offering such courses by decreasing summer melt, a phenomenon in which students accepted into college ultimately decide not to enroll.

Other cost savings for students and institutions may come from using multiple measures in lieu of mandatory placement tests that may not produce appropriate placements and that discourage many students from persisting, as fewer proficient students would be paying for remedial courses that they do not need to take. Additionally, it should cost colleges less to assess multiple measures than to produce and proctor placement exams.

Considerations for Costs Borne by Students

Students needing remediation disproportionately have higher costs in higher education than their peers who do not need remediation (Melguizo et al., 2008). We have thus far highlighted some of the explicit and hidden costs of developmental

Figure 9.1 Depiction of knowledge navigator insights. Sketchnote of symposium discussion by Maria Evans. Copyright 2021 by Educational Testing Service.

education for students. In the following paragraphs, we identify additional considerations related to the costs borne by students.

Importance of Highlighting Equity Costs

The costs of developmental education, including the misalignment of college readiness standards, are borne disproportionately by students (e.g., English language learners [ELLs] compared to monolingual English-speaking students; Melguizo, Flores, et al., 2021; Ngo & Melguizo, 2020; Park et al., 2020). Research suggests that student-focused cost calculations should account for differential explicit and hidden costs, particularly among students of color and ELLs.

Value of Hypothetical Student Cost Calculations

Developmental courses are often noncredit bearing or have reduced college credit value. An institutional or system-level analysis could demonstrate *how* costs may be higher for a typical student. Such an analysis could highlight the estimated costs for a student enrolled for x credit hours in a given semester and required to take y number of remedial courses. Institutions have conducted similar analyses to highlight costs for credit transfer (GAO, 2017).

Conclusion

As students continue to enter higher education academically underprepared, and as developmental education becomes increasingly voluntary, there is a rising need for expanded academic supports. Those supports come with costs. President Biden's $1.8 trillion American Families Plan, unveiled in April 2021, would waive tuition for 2 years of public community college and would provide students with funds to cover the kinds of living expenses that often deter students from lower-income backgrounds. Given the current policy context and momentum toward reducing financial barriers to access, it will be important to understand the financial implications of expanded community college access, which will also likely mean that more academically underprepared students will pursue higher education.

This chapter presents strategies and recommendations designed to improve the landscape of developmental education and the experiences of students needing academic support. Ranging from reforms of assessment and placement mechanisms to an intensifying focus on the role of data, these recommendations highlight the challenges and opportunities for promise programs in service to this diverse student population. We acknowledge that many of our recommendations are primarily situated within initiatives at the institution or system level. However, promise programs run by the larger community (i.e., at the municipal, regional, and/or state level) also have an important role in providing additional academic

support for students as well as serving as the connective tissue among individual-, institutional-, and high school–based services and initiatives.

Finally, we also acknowledge the connections among the other groups in this collection, particularly adult students, students with disabilities, and first-generation students. First, adult students may experience a significant time lapse from their last high school coursework, leading to gaps in knowledge that may cause them to underperform on placement tests or in college-level coursework. These students may benefit from readiness-improvement strategies that are more time efficient (Hawley & Chiang, 2017), such as short-term workshops or remediation efforts prior to taking placement tests or coursework to refresh skills. Models designed to support adult students' unique academic needs, such as integrated basic education skills training, are also an important part of the overall academic support ecosystem and could be integrated into comprehensive college promise solutions for adult students needing academic support.

Students needing remediation are at risk of being stigmatized (Sole, 2020), as are first-generation students (Winograd & Rust, 2014) and students with disabilities (Lisle, 2011; Sole, 2019). We see another connection between first-generation students and students needing academic support, as both groups could benefit from expanded support networks and guidance in navigating unfamiliar terrain (Winograd & Rust, 2014). We also acknowledge that intersectional stigma may be experienced by students of minoritized identities and socially stigmatized identities (Berger, 2004; Brower, Bertrand Jones, & Hu, 2021). We hope our recommendations for students needing academic support may serve to bridge some of these intersections and support all students.

Suggested citation

Daniels, H., Allen, D., Park-Gaghan, T., Hart, L., Sole, M., Jones, T. B., Guzman, A., & Hernandez, M. (2022). Expanding promise draft design: Students needing academic support. In C. M. Millett (Ed.), *Expanding promise: Depicting the ecosystems of support and financial sustainability for five college promise populations* (Research Report No. RR-22-07, pp. 71–80). ETS. https://doi.org/10.1002/ets2.12350

9. Knowledge Navigators Contribute Additional Perspectives on College Promise Ecosystem Designs

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In 2021, ETS and College Promise continued our practice of inviting colleagues to join us as *knowledge navigators*. We created two sets of knowledge navigators. The first group focused on the ecosystem designs, and the second group focused on the financing of the designs. Across the two sets of knowledge navigators, colleagues represented a range of perspectives—from academia to philanthropy to higher education associations. In this role, they reviewed the chapters and ecosystem models prior to the convening. Our intent was for their contributions to aid in creating clarity for the designs, to think about the consequences of their design choices, and to encourage breakthrough thinking.

Ecosystem Knowledge Navigators

On the second day of the symposium, five colleagues who served as ecosystem design knowledge navigators joined moderator Catherine Millett, senior research scientist and strategic adviser at ETS, to provide comments on the five design teams' work and to think about the attributes of each student population featured at the event (see Figure 9.1).

Mike Hoa Nguyen, assistant professor at University of Denver, noted the intersectionality of the five student populations. He reenforced our understanding of the problem of a lack of data on these five student populations and a lack of consistency in the way these populations are defined. With good data and consistently defined variables, better research can be produced to guide practice effectively.

Terry Brown, vice president of academic innovation and transformation for the American Association of State Colleges and Universities, discussed how program development and implementation for students with disabilities is complicated by the lack of self-disclosure. She noted that students often do not self-disclose because of perceived stigma associated with being a person with a disability and because students are not aware of the requirements for self-disclosure at colleges. Brown also pointed out that disability law is distinctly different for high schools and colleges. The two distinct legal contexts each has unique implications for practice that students with disabilities and college leaders need to understand.

Brenda Dann-Messier, a senior adviser at Education Strategy Group, reiterated the theme of the convening by saying that students must have an ecosystem of support to reach their goals. She cited childcare as one of the most difficult barriers for student parents, as well as student parents feeling unwelcome or invisible on college campuses. Dann-Messier echoed other participants' calls for institutional transformation. For example, she said that when a student is a parent, scheduling cannot be typical; institutions must be flexible. Last, she looked to institutional boards to work with institutional leaders to provide supports for special populations.

Mary Heiss, senior vice president of academic and student affairs for the American Association of Community Colleges, offered her organization's belief that community colleges should be as universal as high schools and that a college degree should not necessitate crippling debt. She noted that the pandemic has been particularly hard on the community college sector, which has endured double-digit declines in enrollment. Heiss named advising, corequisites, and orientations as critical supports for students with academic needs.

Amanda Winters, program director for the National Governors Association, asked what it means for a state to commit to a promise ideology. She named infrastructure and policy as key state contributions and institutional practice and student engagement as key institutional contributions. She offered the example of math pathways, saying that "not every student needs to be on a college algebra and calculus pathway." However, Winters pointed out that states must be involved in these conversations because of transfer agreement, transfer policy, and graduation policy concerns. She also said state governments should provide institutional leaders statewide data on special populations so that colleges know the populations generally, not just the populations as they exist on their specific campuses.

All five colleagues agreed that there is need for quality, accurate data—to know how many students there are in a population, how a population is defined, and what barriers these students face as they work toward graduation. Winters made the point that institutions cannot do this alone because their institutional data only capture their own students. Winters cited the need to study and disseminate statewide data so that institutional leaders have knowledge about these populations statewide. Nguyen said that leaders first need to know how the federal government and state governments

Takeaways from the Ecosystem Knowledge Navigators

- Accurate data that is consistently defined is needed to conduct research that will guide practice.
- Collaboration and cooperation must occur between educational institutions, state agencies, and state governments, as well as the federal government, to better serve college students.
- Increase the number of advisors and professional development for advisors across sectors: secondary, postsecondary, and career-technical initiatives to guide students in determining the path to graduation and career.

Figure 9.2 Ecosystem knowledge navigators' recommendations.

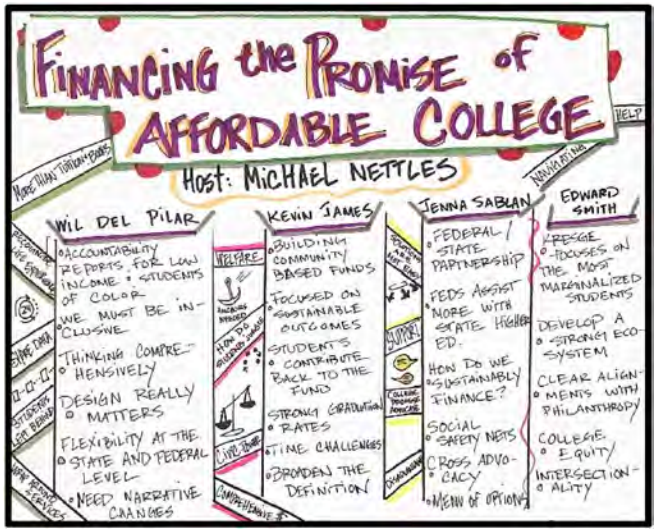

Figure 9.3 Depiction of major points raised by Financing the Promise of Affordable College panelists. Sketchnote of symposium discussion by Maria Evans. Copyright 2021 by Educational Testing Service.

define student populations and then clarify ambiguities in the definitions. In addition, there was an emphasis on collaboration and cooperation. Not only do higher education institutions need to work together, but state agencies need to collaborate and interact with one another and with higher education institutions as well. The federal government and state governments should partner with one another to better serve students. Last, the group cited advising as a critical human resource element in program design. Programs may exist, but without advisers to conduct outreach and support students on campus, the programs will be underused. For a full summary of the panel's takeaways, see Figure 9.2.

Ecosystem Finance Knowledge Navigators

In the latter half of the final day of the symposium, four finance experts in the higher education realm joined moderator Michael Nettles in discussing the advice and recommendations for financial sustainability (see Figure 9.3).

Jenna Sablan, a senior policy analyst for the State Higher Education Executive Officers Association (SHEEO), stated that there is a need to unify existing resources to improve the social safety net for students. She asked how a college promise program could serve as the "anchor that helps connect" the components of the current federal social welfare system to better help students. Sablan noted that financing requires more than simply increasing the Pell Grant allotments that students receive, as students may also need support for housing, food, and/or health care. She explained that, currently, the onus is on higher education to support students' needs using federal, state, and institutional funds, but lack of state and federal funding makes it difficult to meet students' needs. She suggested that a federal–state partnership may be able to help with financing programs and institutions. However, Sablan also stressed that organizations should not be held back

Takeaways from Ecosystem Finance Navigators

- 1. Support cross-sector collaboration to provide comprehensive solutions to student affordability.
- 2. Change the narrative that policymakers have about paying for college.
- 3. Address the student debt dilemma in a sustainable manner (e.g., increasing Pell Grants, debt cancellation, institutional accountability, and manageable repayment).
- 4. Learn from what other countries have done to address student affordability.

Figure 9.4 Ecosystem finance navigators' recommendations.

by a limited budget. A limited budget does not mean they cannot execute policy designs that would help marginalized student populations.

Wil Del Pilar, vice president of higher education policy and practice for Education Trust, agreed with Sablan's idea of a federal–state partnership, adding that issues such as food and housing insecurity, mental health issues, and student debt are treated as single issues. A better approach would be to devise comprehensive solutions that tackle affordability from all sides. He reiterated the importance of wraparound services and stated that there should be flexibility at the institutional level when designing services. Del Pilar went on to talk about the need to change the narrative that policy makers have on funding education from "I worked in the summer and paid my way through college. Why can't students do that?" to the current reality of rising tuition costs and student debt in a context of declining state investment in higher education. He also recommended debt cancelation, doubling the Pell Grant, and holding institutions to greater accountability to prevent them from defrauding students. However, if society simply cancels debt without addressing the issue of affordability, he explained, the debt crisis will simply return.

Kevin James, founder and CEO of Better Future Forward, stated that students should be focusing solely on their studies, but due to current policies, they must juggle work with studies. He concurred with Del Pilar's statement on changing policy makers' narratives on education financing, adding that policy makers should be informed of the supports that students need in addition to tuition. James added that the current "debt-based approach from the last half-century" has been ineffective and that there needs to be more manageable options for debt repayment.

Edward Smith, a program officer at the Kresge Foundation, noted that the role of institutions is to provide students the agency and power to perform their civic responsibilities. He also saw college promise programs as unifiers of existing student supports and as capable of advocating for additional student supports. In addition, Smith pointed out the hypocrisy of discussing how much supports cost when society already subsidizes support costs at some (wealthier) institutions, but not others.

Overall, the finance knowledge navigators emphasized the need for collaboration and cooperation among sectors. Students' needs are complex; thus, comprehensive solutions are needed to address affordability. A federal–state partnership could lift the burden of financing student services off higher education institutions' backs. The finance navigators also discussed the student debt dilemma, suggesting solutions such as debt cancelation, creating a more manageable loan payment system, doubling the Pell Grant, and preventing institutions from defrauding students. They also expressed the need to change the narrative policy makers have on funding education and suggested learning from what other countries have done successfully, such as the income-contingent financing systems in Australia, New Zealand, and the United Kingdom. For a full summary of the panel's takeaways, see Figure 9.4.

Suggested citation

Millett, C. M., Kanter, M. J., Saunders, S. R., & Ankrah, L. Y. (2022). Knowledge navigators contribute additional perspectives on college promise ecosystem designs. In C. M. Millett (Ed.), *Expanding promise: Depicting the ecosystems of support and financial sustainability for five college promise populations* (Research Report No. RR-22-07, pp. 81–83). ETS. https://doi.org/10.1002/ets2.12350

10. Financing the College Promise Ecosystems of Support

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During our first symposium, the 2019 design teams outlined the expenses that need to be factored into a financing model at three levels: that of the student, the institution, and the government. The finance-focused third day of the Expanding Promise: Depicting the Ecosystem of Support and Financial Sustainability for Five College Promise Populations symposium centered on the student and the institution. In considering students, the discussions focused on what programs should fund, options for college promise funding, and alignment of funding methods to the ecosystem models. The intent was to provide college promise funding options for consideration by local communities and state- and federally elected officials and policy makers. With respect to institutions, the exchange of ideas focused on how colleges and universities might build out a better system that would facilitate opening postsecondary education to all students and helping them succeed.

What Promise Could Fund and Provide to Students

Future promise research should include expanding our understanding of what needs to be financed and how. Both the 2019 and 2021 design teams stressed the need to finance things at the student level, such as tuition and fees, technology, housing, health care, food, and transportation (see Table 10.1). However, as with the first set of design teams, these expenses varied by population, and each population has unique expenses. These additional, unique expenses include soft-skills development (for first-generation students); financial support for medical and therapeutic services and assistive technology (students with disabilities); and childcare, coaching, and case management (for student parents).

Funding Programmatic and Institutional Infrastructure Investment on College and University Campuses

We observed that many of the points raised by the 2019 design teams on programmatic and institutional infrastructure investments resonated with the 2021 design teams (see Figure 10.1). Investments were supported in professional development, student support services, collaboration development, and monitoring and evaluation. The 2021 design team members and other event participants added two new perspectives: academic support and marketing communications. Regarding academic support, participants encouraged colleges and universities to review the services and supports they have with an eye to student academic success, particularly for students who may be reengaging in their education after a multiyear break. The emphasis on marketing communications sprang from the multiple touch points about the need for education today to focus on bringing students into our colleges and universities rather than shutting them out. What is the language that will encourage participation and lead to a feeling of belonging on our college campuses?

Leveraged Resources: Options for College Promise Funding

Across the country, promise programs leverage federal and state dollars, philanthropic support, and funds from the private sector to give more people a seat at the table. Leaders must figure out how to maximize available dollars and leverage multiple sources. From the beginning, design teams understood the importance of the collaboration and cooperation of multiple parties to fund tuition and fees. Another major theme was weaving together funding and resources from multiple sources to finance college promise programs and provide supports, with one participant suggesting that college promise programs could coordinate those existing resources while advocating for more supports. Symposium participants also discussed the potential uses of funding from the infrastructure bill and the positive consequences of infrastructure

Table 10.1 Synthesis of Ecosystem Design Team Chapters: The Student Expenses That Need to Be Considered in Financing Models at the Student, Institution, and Government Levels

	First generation	Foster youth	Students with disabilities	Student parents	Students who need academic support
Possible direct education expenses					
Tuition	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Fees	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Textbooks	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Technology (e.g., computer, phone, or internet)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Assistive technology			Yes		
Supplies and major specific fees (major related supplies, e.g., uniforms or equipment; major related fees, e.g., lab fees, background checks, or test fees for licensure; educational opportunities, e.g., internships or study at another campus)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Preattendance costs (e.g., admissions tests, required immunizations, and medical history forms)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Possible ecosystem complimentary expenses					
Food	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Housing (rent or dorm fee; electricity; gas and water)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Transportation (public transportation; car purchase or loan payment; car insurance; car maintenance and repairs; gasoline; parking)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Health care	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Childcare	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Legal services		Yes	Yes		

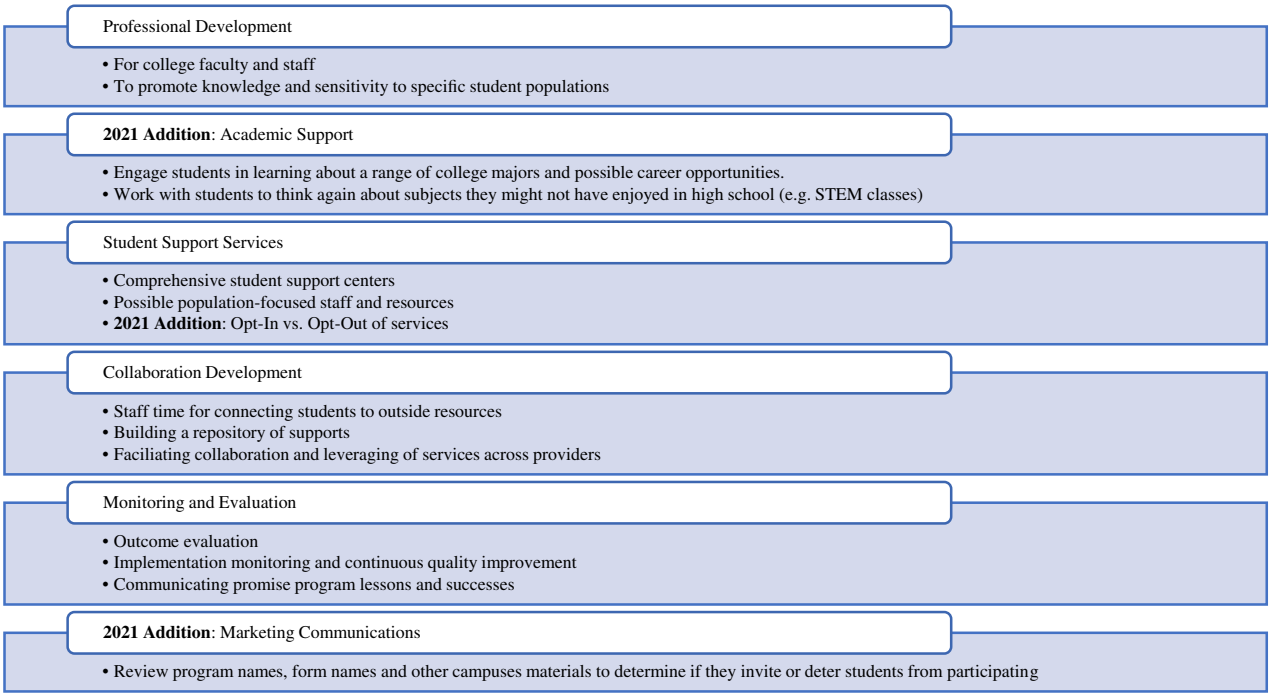

Figure 10.1 Program and institutional infrastructure investment. Adapted from "Financing College Promise Ecosystems" by C. M. Millett, M. Kanter, and M. T. Nettles, in C. M. Millett (Ed.), *Depicting the Ecosystems of Support and Financial Sustainability for Five College Promise Populations* (Research Report No. RR-20-17), ETS, 2020, p. 85.

repair—for example, broadband availability and improving virtual class participation. Last, participants raised the suggestion of a federal–state partnership to compensate for the loss of state funding for higher education to finance college promise programs.

Suggested citation

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11. What Is the Opportunity We Want to Create?

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[2]College Promise, Washington, DC

Perhaps Laverne Srinivasan said it best when she asked participants, "What is the opportunity we want to create?" ETS and College Promise want to create transformative educational opportunities for the most diverse student body in our nation's history by promoting innovation and improvement and eliminating barriers to enable millions more students to enter and complete certificate and degree programs for success in their chosen careers, communities, and states. To do this, we centered student voices prominently in this foundational work. We heard firsthand from our students about their needs, opportunities, and barriers to pursuing their pathways to, through, and beyond college and, most importantly, about what actions we can take to help more students on their educational journeys.

Several of the conclusions from the traditional students, adult students, undocumented students, student veterans, and justice-impacted students design teams at the June 2019 symposium were supported by the first-generation students, foster youth, students with disabilities, student parents, and students needing academic support design teams at the 2021 symposium. Examples of the conclusions from our work follow:

- *It's not just about tuition*. Students' financial needs extend beyond covering the cost of tuition and fees. Students need resources, such as childcare, housing, food, and health care, to free their time and allow them time to focus on studying, as well as reducing the costs they must cover.
- *Not knowing what you do not know*. Students shared that "they did not know what they did not know" about the resources available to them, the rules for accessing the resources, and sometimes the implications of the timing of when they accessed resources.
- *Customize*. While many of the nontuition and fees expenses were borne by all student populations, how needs are met depends on the student population, and approaches to meeting student needs can and should be customized to individuals. For example, while both foster care alumni and students with disabilities need financial support, students with disabilities may need that support for medical equipment and documentation fees, while a foster care alumnus may need housing support.
- *Braided funding*. Institutions need to braid existing financial sources to fund resources, such as campus retention programs and transportation, to ensure program sustainability.
- *College Promise*. Promise programs can compound their impact as they work together and strengthen the alignment of, and confirm shared commitments from, education, government, business, and philanthropy and the broader nonprofit community and state-based sectors.
- *Differences*. The differences between populations should be well understood, as should the similarities.

Then the 2021 design teams raised new points related to student success that also have implications for students and/or institutions:

- *Discontinuation of services*. The transition from high school to college often means a discontinuation of services, as well as a *shift in who pays for secondary education* versus higher education. Especially students in or aged out of foster care need support to navigate this shift.
- *Time*. Several cost implications related to time were discussed, such as study time; course scheduling conflicts; and the hours needed for accessing student services, financial aid, tutoring, and other campus services. All of these time costs compound to mean that it may take longer to complete a degree.
- *Rebranding campaign*. Design teams suggested rebranding student services so they are more inviting and inclusive, for example, changing from "food pantry" to "nutrition center."
- *Opt out of rather than opt in to services*. Rather than expecting students to sign up for services, such as tutoring, personal finance courses, and academic advising, the admissions application should trigger an automatic opt in for services.
- *Clearer and more accurate data*. Lack of up-to-date data on these populations limits the actions organizations can take to help students. A lack of clear definitions of terms (e.g., *disability*, *first-generation*) negatively affects data

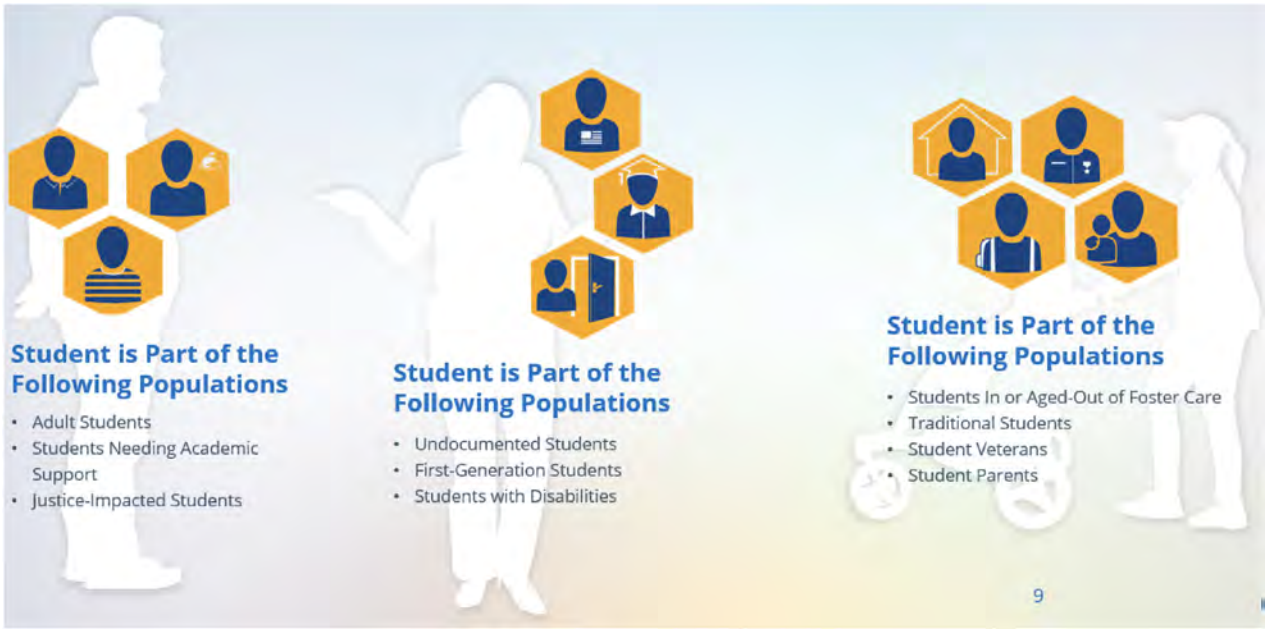

Figure 11.1 Students may identify with multiple populations.

collection, which in turn limits the actions organizations can take, because they do not know just how many students fall under these terms. The lack of data and clear terms is not limited to higher education; it also applies to state institutions and requires communication and collaboration among higher education institutions, the workforce, K–12 institutions, and the state.

- *A fresh look*. Look afresh at extant policies and practices. Ask ourselves, "Are we applying 20th-century solutions to 2020 issues for student success?"
- *Transition points*. Transition points, such as high school to postsecondary education and postsecondary education to workforce, are important as students are entering a new period in their lives. Many students will be both first-generation college students and first-generation professionals.

Last, participants discussed the intersectionality of these populations (see Figure 11.1). Students are not usually part of just one population; as a result, many experience marginalization from multiple angles, and that must be kept in mind when devising solutions for them. Needs can and do overlap across populations, and all college promise programs should aspire to deliver both educational supports and noneducational supports: financial aid for tuition and fees, support for both academic and social needs, housing, health care, mental health services, and transportation.

In the next phase of ETS and College Promise's work, we will redouble our commitment to promoting college promise program sustainability and taking down barriers so that these programs last after individuals leave their positions or elected offices. There is now a critical mass of initiatives and colleagues for us to collaborate with to leverage program design and development strategies and to highlight and spread best practices. Our immediate activities to continue our work include the following:

- *College Promise Research Network*. Researchers, policy scholars, and subject matter experts generate and disseminate a rich body of research for local communities and states to use as they consider the best evidence-based models for creating and implementing sustainable and effective college promise programs.
- *College Promise Careers Institute*.[34] This annual event builds continued national support around the need to integrate and ladder postsecondary education, workforce training, and education technology innovations. The event incorporates advances in "future of work" programming to better prepare learners across ecosystems for lifelong employment and success in their communities.

- *Bringing together the 10 student ecosystem populations*. Weaving together the similarities and differences as well as the interactions and collaborations among the 10 populations will highlight the interconnected systems that form student ecosystems. Educational leaders in primary, secondary, and postsecondary work may well find understanding the complex networks that students navigate helpful to their organizations. Groups seeking to develop and fund college promise programs, as well as donors, community members, and governments, will be able to use these ecosystems to design and sustain their own college promise programs.

ETS and College Promise are committed to making college universal, accessible, and affordable. Giving students the time and resources they need to be successful in postsecondary education ensures the success of all. As we work to grow and mature this movement, we invite you to join us!

Suggested citation

Millett, C. M., Kanter, M. J., & Nettles, M. T. (2022). What is the opportunity we want to create? In C. M. Millett (Ed.), *Expanding promise: Depicting the ecosystems of support and financial sustainability for five college promise populations* (Research Report No. RR-22-07, pp. 87–89). ETS. https://doi.org/10.1002/ets2.12350

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Notes

1 Scholars Present About Research and Knowledge (SPARK) talks give researchers an opportunity to present five-minute lightning talks to audiences they do not often get a chance to engage with. For more information, please visit https://www.library.cornell.edu/sparktalks/
2 Wraparound services may include noninstructional services, such as tutoring, counseling, childcare, and transportation.
3 There is no comprehensive source of national data on education performance of students in foster care, thus ranges are presented from multiple studies.
4 While 17,844 foster youths were emancipated, a total of 18,759 foster youths 18–20 years old left the foster care system (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services et al., 2019); it is possible that some of these youth were placed under guardianship, were transferred to another agency, ran away, or died.
5 Last-dollar programs cover the remaining portion of promised costs after federal, state, and other aid is applied.
6 These ranges represent the different percentages for each type of disability or medical condition (Goldrick-Rab, Baker-Smith, Coca, & Looker, 2019).
7 This percentage was derived from the Institute for Women's Policy Research's analysis of data from the U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 2012/2017 Beginning Postsecondary Students Longitudinal Study.
8 Emancipation or "aging out" refers to a "legal event that occurs when the court formally discharges a young person from the state's custody based on the youth's chronological age" (Unrau et al., 2012, p. 76). In many states, youth in foster care are discharged at 18 years of age; some states have extended care to 21 years of age.
9 The "first-generation" designation is based on parents' educational attainment and not on the student's immigrant status. Parents' highest education level reflects the highest degree earned by either parent.
10 Dumais and Ward (2009) found that many prior studies operationalized cultural capital as participation in or appreciation of high culture; other studies focused on individuals' strategic interactions with important gatekeepers, such as teachers and faculty or school administrators.

11 Havlik et al. (2020) defined this as "a sense of possessing an outsider status, feelings of not belonging, being viewed a different or less than, being misunderstood, excluded, or invalidates or being disadvantaged in comparison to the majority experiences often unwittingly invoked by the comments and actions of their non-first-generation peers or instructors" (p. 124).
12 See Table 34 of Ingels et al. (2005) for comparisons to students whose parents had some college, college graduation, or a graduate/professional degree.
13 Quigley (2021) defines stacked credentials as "individual achievements that are combined over time to improve a learner's employability or skills set. Stackable credentials are not a credential themselves but are simply a framework for accumulating knowledge" (n.p.).
14 This number varies greatly, in part based on the length of time youth were followed during the longitudinal studies on which these statistics are based. Although there are longitudinal studies that lasted more than 20 years, no new longitudinal studies focusing on youth in Texas and Michigan have been published since 2013. There is a vast gap in national longitudinal data on the college-going rates of foster youth that take into account updated policies and practices around higher education access. Additionally, once in higher education, the burden to "prove" that one is a foster care alumnus relies on the student. Therefore higher education institutions may not have an accurate depiction of the number of foster care alumni that they serve, which also skews outcome rates to only include those who have disclosed their status.
15 The Federal TRIO Programs (TRIO) are Federal outreach and student services programs designed to identify and provide services for individuals from disadvantaged backgrounds. TRIO includes eight programs targeted to serve and assist low-income individuals, first-generation college students, and individuals with disabilities to progress through the academic pipeline from middle school to postbaccalaureate programs. TRIO also includes a training program for directors and staff of TRIO projects (U.S. Department of Education, n.d.). For more information please visit https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ope/trio/ .
16 REACH programs seek to empower current and former disadvantaged youth (foster youth, orphans, emancipated minors, wards of the State, and homeless youth) to enroll, matriculate, and graduate from college.
17 *Stopping out* is a term coined by the Carnegie Commission on Higher Education in 1980 that describes the phenomenon of a student who ends their enrollment prematurely and reenrolls after an extended absence (Levine, 2012).
18 The 12 disability categories recognized by IDEA 2004 are autism, deaf-blindness, emotional disturbance, hearing impairment (which includes deafness), intellectual disability, multiple disabilities, orthopedic impairment, other health impairment, specific learning disability, speech or language impairment, traumatic brain injury, and visual impairment.
19 *Age out* refers to students who stay in high school until they are 21 years of age because they are still entitled to and receive special education services based on the evaluation by their multidisciplinary team. This is typically for students with more significant disabilities. Students who do not graduate with a diploma can still attend specialized college programs. These are typically students with intellectual disability. A list of the 300+ programs in the United States can be found at http://www.thinkcollege.com
20 https://disabilityin.org/
21 For more information, please visit https://www.sdccd.edu/about/departments-and-offices/student-services-department/promise/about-promise.aspx
22 For more information, please visit https://www.elcamino.edu/student/studentservices/southbaypromise/
23 For more information, please visit https://www.skylinecollege.edu/promise/
24 Another 30% of student parents attend public (17%) and private (13%) nonprofit 4-year institutions, 18% attend for-profit institutions, and 10% attend other institution types (Institute for Women's Policy Research & Ascend at the Aspen Institute, 2020).
25 Authors' analysis of data from the U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 2015–2016 National Postsecondary Student Aid Study (NPSAS:16) and the Beginning Postsecondary Students Longitudinal Study.
26 Authors' analysis of data from the U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 2012/2017 Beginning Postsecondary Students Longitudinal Study.
27 See Goldrick-Rab, Baker-Smith, Coca, Looker, and Williams (2019) for information on measuring housing insecurity and homelessness.
28 https://rankinfoundation.org/
29 One-third (34%) of student parents with children under age 13 years attend school full-time, 46% attend part-time, and one-fifth (20%) attend a mix of full- and part-time.
30 Authors' analysis of data from the U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 2015–2016 National Postsecondary Student Aid Study and IPEDS.
31 Authors' analysis of data from the U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 2015–2016 National Postsecondary Student Aid Study and IPEDS.
32 Throughout this report, we use *developmental education*, *remedial coursework*, and *remediation* interchangeably, and we imply no negative or positive connotation with the use of any one of the phrases.

33 Total social cost is the total college expenditure (personnel and facilities) plus the total student opportunity cost (student time).
34 Please visit the College Promise website (https://www.collegepromise.org/) to view highlights from past events and watch interactive sessions from previous convenings.

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Supporting Information

Additional supporting information can be found online in the Supporting Information section of this paper.

Executive summary for *Expanding Promise: Depicting the Ecosystems of Support and Financial Sustainability for Five College Promise Populations.*

Appendix A. Expanding Promise Symposium Agenda

Virtual Conference, June 2–3 and June 9, 2021

1–4 p.m. ET | 12–3 p.m. CT | 11 a.m.–2 p.m. MT | 10 a.m.–1 p.m. PT

Individuals' affiliations reflect their institutional affiliations in June 2021.

Day 1: June 2 (Open to the Public)

1:00 P.M.	Welcome and Introduction Michael Nettles, Senior Vice President & Edmund W. Gordon Chair, Policy Evaluation and Research, ETS Catherine Millett, Senior Research Scientist, ETS Martha Kanter, Executive Director, College Promise
1:15 P.M.	Students at the Center: Weighing in on College Promise Ecosystem Designs **Host:** Alex Shebanow, Director and Producer, Fail State **Panelists:** Martin Hernandez, Student, Alamo Colleges District Timari Ray, Student, Pellissippi State Community College Angelique Salizan, Student, Binghamton University Emily Tarconish, Graduate Student, University of Connecticut Waukecha Wilkerson, Student, Sacramento State University
1:45 P.M.	In Conversation: Postsecondary Perspectives on the Role of College Promise in Supporting Different Student Populations **Host:** Michael Nettles, Senior Vice President & Edmund W. Gordon Chair, Policy Evaluation and Research, ETS **Panelists:** Nancy Cantor, Chancellor, Rutgers University–Newark Constance Carroll, Chancellor, San Diego Community College District Michael Flores, Chancellor, Alamo Colleges District
2:45 P.M.	Break
3:00 P.M.	SPARK Talks on the Five College Promise Ecosystems **Host:** Catherine Millett, Senior Research Scientist, ETS **Panelists:** First-Generation Students: Krissy DeAlejandro, Executive Director, Tennessee Achieves Students in or Aged Out of Foster Care: Sebrena Jackson, MSW Program Director and Assistant Professor, University of Alabama Students With Disabilities: Emily Tarconish, Graduate Student, University of Connecticut Student Parents: Lindsey Reichlin Cruse, Study Director, Student Parent Success Initiative, Institute for Women's Policy Research Students Needing Academic Support: Toby Park-Gaghan, Associate Professor, Florida State University
3:30 P.M.	The Honorable Governor William Haslam, former Governor of Tennessee
3:45 P.M.	Summary of the Day

Day 2: June 3 (Private Design Teams Workshop)

1:00 P.M.	Welcome and Introduction Michael Nettles, Senior Vice President & Edmund W. Gordon Chair, Policy Evaluation and Research, ETS Catherine Millett, Senior Research Scientist, ETS Martha Kanter, Executive Director, College Promise
1:15 P.M.	Holistic Examination of the Five College Promise Ecosystems (Group Work) Each team will have a breakout room. Knowledge Navigators can choose which team conversation to join. The goal of this session is to discuss the ecosystem design and consider how to refine/expand the designs.
1:45 P.M.	Work Group Reporting Representative(s) of each design team conversation shares **three takeaways** from the 1:15 session. First-Generation Students: Lisette Nieves, Director of Educational Leadership, New York University Students in or Aged Out of Foster Care: Lauren Ford, Interim Director of Strategic Initiatives & Planning, San Mateo County Community College District Students With Disabilities: Richard Allegra, Associate Director of Education and Outreach Services, National Center for College Students with Disabilities Student Parents: David Croom, Assistant Director for Postsecondary Achievement and Innovation, Aspen Institute Students Needing Academic Support: Hollie Daniels, Doctoral Candidate and Graduate Research Assistant, Florida State University
2:30 P.M.	Break
2:45 P.M.	Insights from External Knowledge Navigators **Host:** Catherine Millett, Senior Research Scientist, ETS **Panelists:** Terry Brown, Vice President, Academic Innovation & Transformation, American Association of State Colleges and Universities Brenda Dann-Messier, Senior Adviser, Education Strategy Group Saleem Ghubril, Executive Director, Pittsburgh Promise Mary Heiss, Senior Vice President, Academic and Student Affairs, American Association of Community Colleges Mike Hoa Nguyen, Assistant Professor, University of Denver Amanda Winters, Program Director, National Governors Association
3:45 P.M.	Next Steps: Working Together to Advance College Promise Martha Kanter, Executive Director, College Promise Catherine Millett, Senior Research Scientist, ETS Michael Nettles, Senior Vice President & Edmund W. Gordon Chair, Policy Evaluation and Research, ETS

Day 3: June 9 (Open to the Public)

1:00 P.M.	Overview of the Day Catherine Millett, Senior Research Scientist, ETS
1:15 P.M.	In Conversation: Foundation Perspectives on the Role of College Promise in Supporting Different Student Populations **Host:** Martha Kanter, Executive Director, College Promise **Panelists:** LaVerne Srinivasan, Vice President, National Program, Carnegie Corporation of New York Peter Taylor, President, ECMC Foundation

1:45 P.M.	SPARK Talks on Financing the Five College Promise Ecosystems
	Host: Catherine Millett, Senior Research Scientist, ETS
	Each ecosystem team will give a SPARK Talk.
	First-Generation Students, Adnan Bokhari, Chief Operating Officer, National Immigration Law Center
	Students in or Aged Out of Foster Care: Angelique Day, Associate Professor, University of Washington
	Students With Disabilities: Richard Allegra, Associate Director of Education and Outreach Services, National Center for College Students with Disabilities
	Student Parents: Nate Johnson, Owner & Principal Consultant, Postsecondary Analytics
	Students Needing Academic Support: Drew Allen, Associate Vice President for Institutional Data Analytics, Georgetown University
2:15 P.M.	Break
2:30 P.M.	Michelle Asha Cooper, Acting Assistant Secretary, U.S. Department of Education
2:45 P.M.	Financing the Promise of Affordable College
	Host: Michael Nettles, Senior Vice President & Edmund W. Gordon Chair, Policy Evaluation and Research, ETS
	Panelists:
	Wil Del Pilar, Vice President of Higher Education Policy and Practice, Ed Trust
	Kevin James, Founder and CEO, Better Future Forward
	Jenna Sablan, Senior Policy Analyst, State Higher Education Executive Officers
	Edward Smith, Program Officer, Education Program, The Kresge Foundation
3:45 P.M.	Next Steps: Working Together to Advance College Promise
	Martha Kanter, Executive Director, College Promise
	Catherine Millett, Senior Research Scientist, ETS
	Michael Nettles, Senior Vice President & Edmund W. Gordon Chair, Policy Evaluation and Research, ETS

Appendix B. 2021 Design Teams

College Promise and ETS acknowledge the contributions of all the members of the 2021 Design Teams. (Individuals' affiliations reflect their institutional affiliations in June 2021.)

First-Generation Students

Adnan Bokhari, National Immigration Law Center
Krissy DeAlejandro, TN Achieves
Lisette Nieves, New York University
Timari Ray, Pellissippi State Community College
Marco Torres, New York University

Students in or Aged Out of Foster Care

Angelique Day, University of Washington
Lauren Ford, San Mateo County Community College District
Doug Harris, Tulane University
Sebrena Jackson, University of Alabama
Catherine Lester, Annie E. Casey Foundation
Angelique Salizan, independent consultant

Students With Disabilities

Teri Adams, Stanford University
Richard Allegra, National Center for College Students With Disabilities
Stephen Rose, Urban Institute
Tracy Sinclair, University of Connecticut
Ashley Taconet, University of Connecticut
Emily Tarconish, University of Connecticut
Mary Lee Vance, California State University, Sacramento

Student Parents

Sherry Cleary, City University of New York
David Croom, Ascend at the Aspen Institute
Andrew Hunt, Tennessee Higher Education Commission
Nate Johnson, Postsecondary Analytics, LLC
Brandi Lóera-Mendiola, California State University, Fresno
Larissa Mercado-Lopez, California State University, Fresno
Lindsey Reichlin Cruse, Institute for Women's Policy Research
Carrie Welton, Hope Center for College, Community and Justice
Waukecha Wilkerson, Cell-Ed

Students Needing Academic Support

Drew Allen, Georgetown University
Tamara Bertrand Jones, Florida State University
Hollie Daniels, Florida State University
Jonathan Furr, EdSystems
Alyssa Guzman, St. Philip's College
Lee Hart, Better Future Forward
Martin Hernandez, Alamo Colleges District

Alison Kadlec, SOVA
Tatiana Melguizo, University of Southern California
Toby Park-Gaghan, Florida State University
Marla Sole, Guttman Community College
George Spencer, University of Georgia

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