

Why the Postsecondary Student Success Grant Program Matters

While there has been an increase in national high school graduation rates over the last two decades, millions of students “stop-out” — leave college without completing a degree — forfeiting the economic benefits that a college degree provides. The national six-year college completion rate continues to stall at 62 percent, however, there are widespread disparities among students who begin at public two-year colleges, Black, Latinx, and Native American students.

TAKE ACTION

Fund the Postsecondary Student Success Grants program (PSSG) at \$165 million to help institutions invest in data-driven and evidence-based reforms to encourage postsecondary retention, and completion among students who are close to graduation, as well as those who stopped-out because of various challenges.

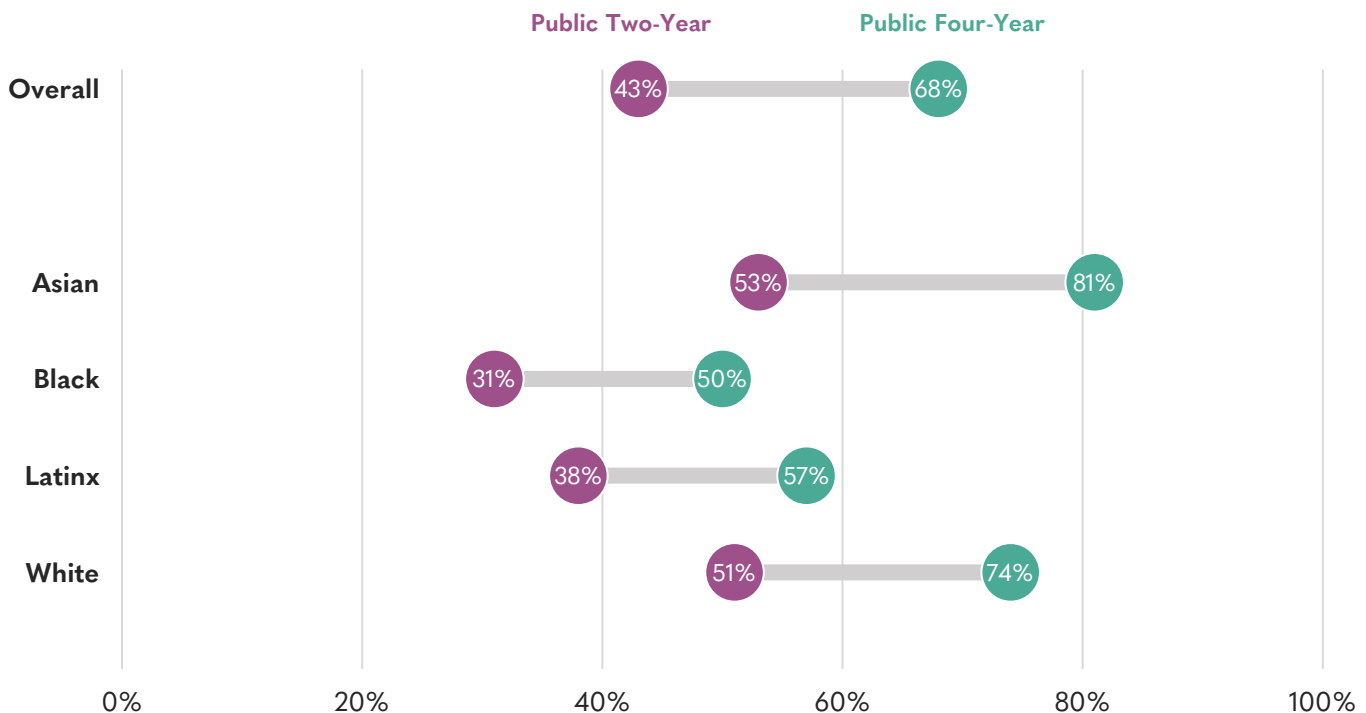
WHY STUDENTS STOP OUT

- » Nationally, over 40 million students with some college, no degree, a number that increased by over a million students in just one year.
- » Barriers to completion effects students of all ages. Efforts to reduce “stop-out” have historically focused on the “non-traditional aged” student, but in fact more students are stopping out before 25.
- » ACCESS & AFFORDABILITY BARRIERS:
 - » Additional fees and costs beyond tuition
 - » Disjointed college and career advising supports
 - » Limited access to affordable transportation and high-quality childcare options

Dismantling these barriers can increase college completion and boost postsecondary attainment of adults, particularly Black, Latinx, Native American, and community college students who left college without a degree.

Targeted comprehensive support is needed to get more public two-year college students to the finish line where only 43% of students in the 2016 cohort completed degrees. There are additional disparities among Black and Latinx students with completion rates of 31% and 38%, respectively.

» Public community colleges and four-year completion rates, 2016 cohort



Source: National Student Clearinghouse: https://nscresearchcenter.org/wp-content/uploads/Completions_Report_2022.pdf

» Graduation Rates of Pell Recipients, 2015 & 2018 Cohorts

Completion within 150% of normal time (six years for four-year programs, three years for two-year programs).

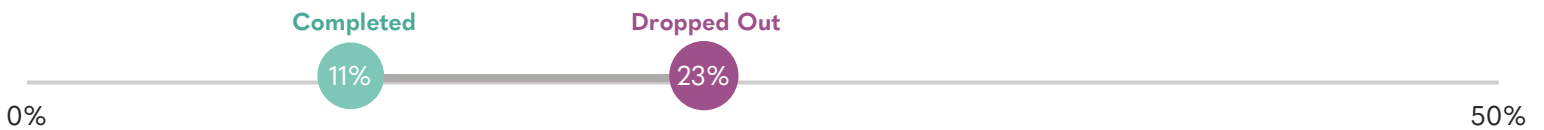


Source: IPEDS: https://nces.ed.gov/ipeds/Search?query=&query2=&resultType=all&page=1&sortBy=date_desc&overlayTableId=32473

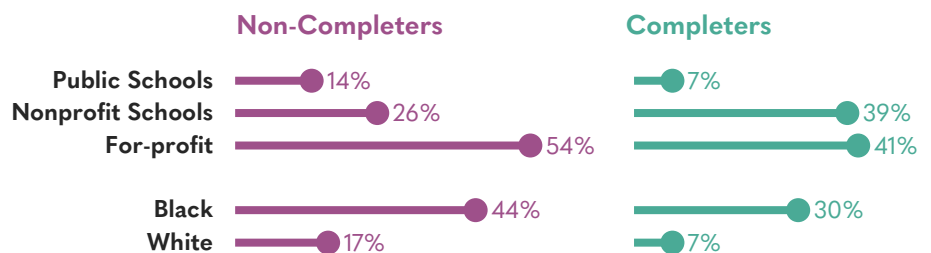
STUDENTS WHO STOP OUT ARE AT-RISK OF DEFAULTING

Borrowers who do not complete a credential are more likely to default than those who do. Students who started college in 2003-04 but stopped-out are twice as likely to default on their student loans compared to those who completed a degree within six years.

» Students Who Started College in 2003-04 and Defaulted on Student Loans:



Among those who defaulted, **non-completers** are twice as likely to default at public schools, and one-third more likely to default at for-profit schools. Furthermore, Black non-completers are disproportionately more likely to default than white completers and non-completers.



Source: The Self-Defeating Consequences of Student Loan Default. <https://ticas.org/affordability-2/self-defeating-consequences-student-loan-default/>

INVESTING IN STRATEGIES THAT WORK

One model has emerged that is backed by an increasingly robust body of evidence: comprehensive approaches to student success (CASS). Seven CASS models — Bottom Line, CUNY ASAP | ACE, InsideTrack™, National Institute for Student Success (NISS), One Million Degrees, Project QUEST, and Stay the Course — have been evaluated using randomized control trials showing CASS programs' impact on short-term outcomes, such as persistence and credit accumulation for students enrolled in community colleges and four-year colleges or universities. The PSSG presents an opportunity to build evidence with the replication and scale of evidence-based programs to meet the evolving needs of students in diverse institutional contexts.

The strong demand for federal support to help colleges increase completion among students who stopped out is evident with over 100 applications for the inaugural **\$5 million PSSG competition investment in the Postsecondary Student Success Grants program**.

Inaugural grants were awarded to the following institutions:

- Austin Community College (Texas)
- Claflin University (South Carolina)
- Florida International University (Florida)
- Orangeburg–Calhoun Technical College (South Carolina)
- Passaic County Community College (New Jersey)

HOW GRANTEES PLAN TO USE FUNDS

» Austin Community College

Austin Community College Ensuring Student Success (ACCESS) Project

Coaching Support: ACCESS will provide outreach and reenrollment coaching delivered by InsideTrack™ to improve enrollment, persistence, completion, and career readiness.

Comprehensive Student Support: ACCESS will support 1,000 students who stopped out after 2020 with comprehensive financial, personal, social, family, and technological support, including:

- Child Care
- Transportation
- Textbooks
- Tutoring
- Digital Devices
- Personal Counseling

Building Evidence: InsideTrack™ [research-proven coaching methodology](#) will help re-engage and re-enroll stopped-out students and currently enrolled students at-risk of stopping out.

» Claflin University

Targeting Recruitment and Supports to Students Who Stop-Out through Innovative Access to Success Pathway Project

Wraparound Student Services: Students will receive personalized student outreach, coaching, scholarships, financial literacy resources, and institutional debt forgiveness.

Expanded Academic Offerings: CU is adopting new policies to award credit for prior learning and provide hybrid instructional opportunities.

Building Evidence: CU will implement practices tested and measured by [The Power of Coaching](#) study, which can inform the field on the effectiveness of coaching within the context of a Historically Black College or University (HBCU).

» Florida International University

Addressing Barriers with Financial Resources and Wraparound Support

Targeted Outreach: Scaling targeted outreach to students who have stopped out during the COVID-19 and at-risk of stopping out due to financial reasons. Additionally, identified students will have access to financial assistance and financial wellness support.

Financial Wellness Coaching: FIU will hire peer coaches to increase their financial wellness coaching program. Each student will be assigned either a peer or professional financial coach to identify root causes of financial barriers and help improve students' financial literacy to disrupt cycles of financial challenges.

Building Evidence: FIU will continue to scale and evaluate these efforts while also building evidence from [The Effects of Student Coaching An Evaluation of a Randomized Experiment in Student Advising](#) in the context of financial wellness.

» Orangeburg-Calhoun Technical College

Re-engagement and Completion Experience (RACE) to Finish

RACE is designed to promote retention and completion for students who are currently enrolled at OCTech, as well as students who are close to completion (50% or more credits earned) who stopped-out because of challenges faced during the COVID-19 pandemic through two main strategies:

First-Semester Experience: Providing students college-wide support including the following:

- Expanded college-wide orientation activities;
- A revamped advising process
- Designated advisors to provide appreciative advising
- An online course success tutorial
- Community-building activities.

Academic Calendar Expansion: Increasing campus-wide flexibility including the creation of two seven-week terms in Fall and Spring semesters, increased hybridization and simulation, and the addition of the Weekend Warrior College program to provide working adults with open labs on Fridays and Saturdays.

Building Evidence: OCTech will evaluate the revamped advising process and advising-related activities to contribute to promising evidence in the What Works Clearinghouse.

» Passaic County Community College

Targeted Support for Stop-Out Students Program (PCCC-TSSS)

Advising and Coaching: PCCC-TSS will scale the SUCCESS program, incorporate targeted outreach, advising, and coaching support to students who "stopped-out". Additionally, PCCC-TSSS is leveraging the PSSG award to incorporate InsideTrack™ Coaching—an evidence-based student completion strategy.

Financial Support and Resources: Participating SUCCESS students receive a \$50 incentive and a \$200 emergency aid stipend to assist with transportation, child care, laptop, and technology access.

Building Evidence: PCCC-TSSS will build evidence on the scale of MDRC's Evidence-Based Community College Scaling Up College Completion Efforts for Student Success ([SUCCESS](#)) at a Hispanic Serving community college.