ASSOCIATION OF PUBLIC & LAND-GRANT UNIVERSITIES

2017 Project Degree Completion Award

Application Packet

Purpose

The Association of Public and Land-grant Universities (APLU) established the Project Degree Completion Award to achieve the following:

- Reward and bolster the current efforts of public universities that are successfully improving the retention and graduation of students;

- Collect effective campus-based models from successful public universities for other institutions to use to increase student retention and graduation; and

- Mobilize all colleges and universities to prioritize improving student retention and graduation outcomes.

The award is open only to APLU institutions and serves to advance Project Degree Completion (PDC), a joint effort between APLU and the American Association of State Colleges and Universities (AASCU) in which nearly 500 public colleges and universities have pledged to collectively award 3.8 million more degrees by 2025. Together, this increase will represent the public four-year institutions' contribution toward the national goal of having 60 percent of working age adults in the U.S. possess a college degree.

Application and Award Timeline

March 23	Application period for 2017 opens
April 14	Letter of Intent to apply due by 5pm PDT
June 2	Applications due by 5pm PDT
June-July	Review of applications
August 1	Up to five finalists announced
November 12-14	Finalists recognized* and award recipient announced at the APLU Annual Meeting in Washington, DC.

*Finalists and award recipient are required to have institutional representatives, including the president or chancellor, at the APLU Annual Meeting.

General Information, Review Process, & Prizes

A seven member panel representing APLU member institutions, higher education, and other partners will review applications to select up to five finalists for the 2017 PDC Award. Finalists will be announced on August 1st and highlighted publicly through APLU's social media accounts, member newsletter, and other channels.

Each finalist will receive a plaque of recognition and will be showcased at a prominent session during the APLU Annual Meeting (November 12-14) in Washington, DC to present an overview of their work. Additionally, APLU will highlight the innovative degree completion strategies of each finalist on the association's website. Finally, this year's finalists will be given the opportunity to be featured in APLU's #Data4Students series, a collection of case studies to highlight institutions who are effectively using data to increase student success.

The winner of the 2017 Project Degree Completion Award will be announced and presented with a trophy on Sunday, November 12 at the 2017 APLU Annual Meeting in Washington, DC. Additionally, APLU's president will travel to the winning institution's campus for a series of events to highlight and promote that institution's role as a national leader in implementing innovative degree completion programs. The visit would, at the winning university's discretion, include a media event to which local elected officials and others could be invited to celebrate the PDC Award and the institution's leadership in driving student success.

While access is a significant milestone, the PDC Award draws attention to improvements in retention and graduation outcomes for bachelor's degree seeking students. Initiatives and programs that have increased the institution's retention and/or graduation outcomes will be considered. Outcomes can be measured in multiple ways including: decreases in achievement gaps; increases in retention rates; graduation rates for all students; or graduation rates of specific groups of students. This year we have also added an outcomes worksheet to help guide institutions in providing specific data and evidence.

In an effort to encourage institutions to apply whom have sought to address particularly vexing challenges within higher education, the review panel will give special consideration to initiatives that respond to **the 2017 competitive preference: *Post-Traditional Learners*** – programs and initiatives aimed at increasing the success and degree completion of subpopulations who have been historically considered underrepresented in higher education (e.g., low-income students, first-generation students, minority students, students with disabilities, adult students, veteran students, formerly incarcerated students, etc.). Initiatives beyond this competitive preferences are also eligible for consideration.

Applications will be judged according to the following criteria and weighting scheme.

- Institutional Context, Problem Statement, and Significance of Effort (10%)
- Overview of Initiatives and Programs (10%)
- Description of Implementation and Institutional Buy-In Strategy (10%)
- Results of Initiatives and Programs (40%)
- Sustainability of Initiatives and Programs and Lessons Learned (30%)

Eligibility

All APLU member institutions are eligible and invited to submit an application for the 2017 PDC Award. Initiatives (or programs) that have improved the institution's retention and graduation outcomes will be considered. <u>The strongest applications will provide evidence that an initiative (or program) has a significant impact on degree completion outcomes.</u> Previous award recipients are not eligible to apply in the two years immediately following receipt of the PDC Award.

Submission Requirements

Letter of intent to apply (Due Friday, April 14, 2017, 5pm PDT) - Applicants are <u>strongly encouraged, though not required,</u> to submit a letter of intent to apply. This non-binding letter should be signed by the institution's president or chancellor and identify the primary contact person for the application (including name, title, email address, and phone number). The letter can be brief, but may include information regarding the institution's mission, student success goals, or overall strategy related to improving retention and graduation outcomes. The letter of intent to apply should be submitted electronically (PDF) to pdc@aplu.org.

Application (Due Friday, June 2, 2017, 5pm PDT) – The PDC Award application must be submitted electronically to pdc@aplu.org. Only one application per institution is allowed. Applications should provide clear and compelling information about the institution's efforts toward improving student retention and/or graduation outcomes. For detailed instructions on completing the application, see the PDC Award Application Packet available in following pages.

Questions?

Please direct all inquiries to: Travis T. York, Ph.D., Director of Student Success, Research, & Policy at tyork@aplu.org or (202) 478-6047.

PDC Award Application Packet

Submission Instructions

- A letter expressing an institution's intent to apply is strongly encouraged and should be submitted to pdc@aplu.org.

- The complete PDC Award application must be submitted electronically to pdc@aplu.org as a single PDF file

- Applications should be formatted as specified below and Sections 1-5 are not to exceed **10 pages** (i.e., page limit excludes Cover Page, Letter of Intent or Endorsement, and the Appendix).

Application Checklist

Assemble the required sections in the following order:

___   Institution Contact Information and Abstract Cover Page

___   Sec. 1: Institutional Context, Problem Statement, and Significance of Effort

___   Sec. 2: Overview of Initiative

___   Sec.3: Description of Implementation and Institutional Buy-In Strategy

___   Sec. 4: Results of Initiative

___   Sec. 5: Sustainability of Initiative and Lessons Learned

___   Letter of Intent *OR* Letter of Endorsement from President/Chancellor*

___   Appendix (required Data Worksheet; other material optional - limited to 5 pages)

*If an institution did **not** submit a letter of intent, then the application packet must include a letter of endorsement from the president or chancellor.*

Formatting Guidelines

The application should adhere to the following formatting guidelines.

- Font/Type style: Times New Roman, 12-point
- Margins: 1" all around (left-hand, right-hand, top and bottom)
- Line Spacing: Double-spaced
- Page Number Placement: Bottom center

This Application Packet is formatted to the above specifications and can be used as a template for entering the application information. The submission requirements and instructions within the Application Packet can be removed as appropriate.

Cover Page

Institutional Contact Information

Date Submitted: mm/dd/yyyy

Name of Institution:

Name of Initiative/Program:

Primary Institution Contacts:	Full Name, Title of the Primary Contact Person, Address, Phone Number, and Email Address

Abstract

Provide an overview of the initiative/program being submitted for consideration. Abstracts must be 250 words or less, double-spacing throughout. Abstracts may be used on APLU websites and publications.

Section 1:
Institutional Context, Problem Statement, and Significance of Effort (10%)

Describe the institutional context and significance of the retention and/or graduation effort at the institution. Indicate and demonstrate the problem intended to be addressed by the initiative and discuss its significance. Include the following information.

- A brief descriptions of the institutional context, such as:
  - Mission of institution – Historically Black College or University, Hispanic-Serving Institution, Land-Grant University, etc.
  - Student body characteristics – racial/ethnic composition, number/percent low income or Pell-grant students, etc.
  - Admissions criteria – standardized test scores, average high school GPA, etc.
- Demonstrate the problem being addressed with supporting evidence, such as:
  - Size and characteristics of the targeted student population - low income, first generation, underserved group, student veteran, etc.
  - Explain the barriers experienced by the population and how said barriers affected their retention or graduation.
- Discuss the retention/graduation outcomes selected for improvement (e.g., year to year retention rate, degrees awarded, time to degree, achievement gaps) and the rationale for this choice.

Section 2:
Overview of Initiative (10%)

Describe the initiative that resulted in improvements in student retention and/or graduation outcomes. Include the following information:

- The goals and objectives of the initiative.
- How the initiative changed or augmented any previous efforts to improve retention and/or graduation outcomes.
- Please demonstrate clear alignment between this initiative and the problem being addressed to increase students' success (as identified in Section 1).
- How the results of the initiative were assessed, including the identification of the data or metrics used to determine effectiveness, comparative impact (either by benchmarked data or a comparable control group), and achievement of objectives.
- Initial investment or start-up costs as well as ongoing costs to continue the initiative or program. A budget may be included in the Appendix.

Section 3:
Description of Implementation and Institutional Buy-In Strategy (10%)

Summarize the implementation and institutional buy-in strategy, focusing on the implementation process and how the commitment of the university community and additional stakeholders were achieved. Include the following information.

- An overview of the implementation plan and timeline.
- What were the key factors that enabled a successful implementation?
  - What, if any, cultural changes needed to occur and how were they achieved?
  - What systemic or structural elements were needed and how were they achieved?
- How were key stakeholders identified and then engaged in the implementation of the initiative/program?
  - Key Stakeholders include those within the institution and may include those within the wider community.
  - How was buy-in accomplished for these groups (e.g., communication strategies, etc.)?

Section 4:
Results of Initiative (40%)

Describe the outcomes of the initiative that improved the retention and graduation outcomes of the targeted student group over the course of the initiative. Provide commentary on whether goals (as provided in Section 1 were met) provide detailed discussion of the outcomes associated with each goal. This section must be accompanied by PDC Award Data Worksheet (located in the Appendix) which should be modified to include outcome variables of importance for this initiative.

Evidence may include both quantitative and qualitative measures, but should include, at a minimum, metrics for the target population that show improvement in retention and graduation outcomes that can be reasonably attributed to the initiative (i.e., using commonly agreed upon standards of assessment). To demonstrate the outcomes achieved, trend data for periods before, during, and after the implementation of the initiatives or programs should be provided. If initiatives or programs targeted a subset of students at the institutions, also provide parallel metrics for an appropriate comparison group of students at the institution. Graduation rates may be reported using the traditional federal graduation rates (IPEDS) or the Student Achievement Measure (SAM). The Data Worksheet (Section 5) should be completed and used as a compliment to the other results reported in this section.

Section 5:
Sustainability of Initiative and Lessons Learned (30%)

Explain how the institution plans to sustain, modify, or expand the initiative being recommended for the PDC award. Include an overview of lessons learned during program implementation and considerations for broader scalability. Other information may include the following:

- Sustainability
    - o Outline the future goals and objectives of the initiative.
    - o Describe the structures, systems, people, and/or financial models in place to support the continuation of the initiative.
    - o Describe the process that will be used to evaluate the ongoing success and/or effectiveness of the initiative.
    - o What was the impact of the initiative on institutional policies or practices? Institutional culture? Faculty, staff, and students?
- Scalability & Replicability
    - o If applicable, how do you plan to increase the scale of the initiative?
    - o Do you believe the initiative can be successfully replicated or transferred to other institutions? Why or why not?
- Lessons Learned
    - o What was the biggest challenge in implementing the initiative, and how was the challenge overcome or mitigated?
    - o What are the most important considerations for an institution wanting to replicate the initiative?

Letter of Intent *OR* Letter of Endorsement from President/Chancellor

If your institution submitted a letter of intent to apply by April 1, 2016, please include it here. If your institution did not submit a letter of intent to apply, please provide a letter of endorsement from the institution's president or chancellor.

Appendix

All submission **must** include Appendix A: PDC Award Data Worksheet. Optional appendices may include references (APA citation format), tables, charts, images, letters of support, etc.

PDC Award Application Packet

Appendix A: Institution Data Worksheet

Please provide at least one year of institution level baseline data and at least three years of data after the intervention for the overall undergraduate population as well as any relevant subpopulation. Metrics with an asterisk (*) are required. Institutions are encouraged to add other outcomes data to this worksheet that are specific to their initiatives - for example, other subpopulations (e.g., first-generation, transfers, specific racial/ethnic groups) or metrics such as time-to-degree or still enrolled. Data for relevant course or program level metrics can be includes as additional tables in the Appendix or within Section 4.

Institutional Characteristics	BASELINE		Intervention					
	YEAR	YEAR	YEAR	YEAR	YEAR	YEAR	YEAR	YEAR
Total Undergraduates (N)*								
% of Students of Color (SOC)*								
% Pell-Recipients (Pell)*								
% Other: _____								
Total # of Bachelor Degrees Awarded*								
# of Bachelor's Degrees Awarded (SOC)*								
# of Bachelor's Degrees Awarded (Pell)*								
# of Bachelor's Degrees Awarded (Other)								

Student Retention Metrics

Overall 1st to 2nd Year Retention Rate*								
SOC 1st to 2nd Year Retention Rate*								
Pell 1st to 2nd Year Retention Rate*								
(Other): 1st to 2nd Year Retention Rate								

Student 4 Year Completion Metrics

Overall 4 yr. Completion Rate (your inst)*								
Overall 4 yr. Completion Rate (another inst)								
SOC 4 yr. Completion Rate (your inst)*								
SOC 4 yr. Completion Rate (another inst)								
Pell 4 yr. Completion Rate (your inst) *								
Pell 4 yr. Completion Rate (another inst)								
(Other) : 4 yr. Completion Rate (your inst)								
(Other) : 4 yr. Completion Rate (another inst)								

Student 6 Year Completion Metrics

Overall 6 yr. Completion Rate (your inst)*								
Overall 6 yr. Completion Rate (another inst)								
SOC 6 yr. Completion Rate (your inst)*								
SOC 6 yr. Completion Rate (another inst)								
Pell 6 yr. Completion Rate (your inst) *								
Pell 6 yr. Completion Rate (another inst)								
(Other): 6 yr. Completion Rate (your inst)								
(Other): 6 yr. Completion Rate (another inst)								