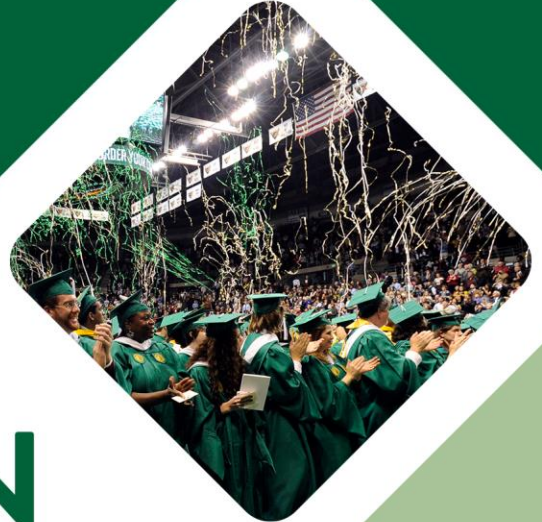




ASSOCIATION OF
PUBLIC &
LAND-GRANT
UNIVERSITIES



2021 DEGREE COMPLETION AWARD

APPLICATION PACKET

SUBMISSION DEADLINE: SEPTEMBER 1, 2021

Association of Public and Land-grant Universities 2021 Degree Completion Award Application Guidelines

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

- Recognize and reward public universities that are increasing degree completion rates, and total numbers of degrees awarded, while improving educational access, quality, and equity;
- Collect effective campus-based models from public universities that other institutions can adopt and adapt to increase student success at scale; and
- Mobilize all colleges and universities to prioritize institutional change efforts to increase student success and degree completion outcomes.

Application and Award Timeline

June 21	Application period for 2021 opens
September 1	Applications due by 5 PM (PDT)
September	Review of applications
October	Up to five finalists showcased in Institutional Strategies sessions
November 14-16	Award recipient showcased at APLU's Annual Meeting.*

**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

The APLU Degree Completion Award is open to all APLU member institutions. An award submission review committee representing APLU member institutions, higher education leaders, and other partners will evaluate applications to select up to five finalists and a winner for the Degree Completion Award. Each finalist will receive a plaque of recognition and will be expected to present an overview of their work at one of APLU's Institutional Strategies sessions which will be held virtually in October this year. Finalists will be announced in October, and highlighted publicly through APLU's social media accounts, member newsletter, and other communication channels.

The winner of the Degree Completion Award will be announced on Sunday, November 14 at APLU's 2021 Annual Meeting in Philadelphia, PA and will be expected to present an overview of their work at that time. Additionally, APLU's president, if invited, is willing to 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 could, at the winning university's discretion, include a media event to which local elected officials and

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others could be invited to celebrate the Degree Completion Award and the institution's leadership in driving student success.

APLU's Degree Completion Award draws attention to improvements in degree completion outcomes for bachelor's degree seeking students. Initiatives and programs that have increased the institution's completion rates and additional student success outcomes will be considered. Institutions who have increased degree completion outcomes while decreasing achievement and opportunity gaps are especially encouraged to apply. Outcomes can be evidenced in multiple ways, including statistically significant variation between a reasonable comparison and treatment group; historical baselines (with reasonable comparisons); or improved completion rates across historically underserved student groups. Such evidence should be incorporated into institutional responses within the application and evidenced in the included Institutional Data Worksheet.

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

- Institutional Context, Problem Statement, & Significance of Effort (10%)
- Initiative Design & Approach Rationale (15%)
- Implementation & Institutional Change Process (15%)
- Evidence & Impact of Initiative (40%)
- Sustainability of Initiative, Lessons Learned, & Scalability (20%)

Resubmission for Previous Year's Applicants

2020 applicants who wish to reapply with the same program/initiative may do so by submitting an updated Institution Data Worksheet (located in Appendix A of the application template). Previous year applicants may update and submit their full application. Resubmissions will be treated in the same manner and with the same standards as all other submissions.

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Eligibility

All APLU member institutions are eligible and invited to apply for the 2021 APLU Degree Completion Award. Initiatives (or programs) that have improved the institution's four-year degree completion numbers and rates will be considered. The strongest applications will provide evidence that an initiative has a significant impact on degree completion outcomes. Previous award winners are not eligible to apply in the two years immediately following receipt of the award.

Submission Requirements

Application (Due September 1, 2021, 5pm PDT) – The Degree Completion Award application must be submitted by email to DegreeCompletion@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. Applications should be limited to 10 pages.

Applications must include a Letter of Endorsement 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 should be brief, but may include information regarding the institution's mission, student success goals, or overall strategy related to improving retention and graduation outcomes.

For detailed instructions on completing the application, see the Degree Completion Award Application Packet available in following pages.

Questions?

Please direct logistic inquiries to:

Bernard Mair
Senior Vice President of Academic Affairs
and Chief Academic Officer
bmair@aplu.org

Stephen Schiavone
Program Associate, OAA
sschiavone@aplu.org or (202) 478-6097

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Submission Instructions

- Complete Degree Completion Award applications must be submitted electronically to DegreeCompletion@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 Endorsement from President or Chancellor, data worksheet, 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, & Significance of Effort
- ___ Sec. 2: Description of Initiative & Approach Rationale
- ___ Sec. 3: Description of Implementation & Institutional Change Process
- ___ Sec. 4: Evidence & Impact of Initiative
- ___ Sec. 5: Sustainability of Initiative, Lessons Learned, & Scalability
- ___ Letter of Endorsement from President/Chancellor
- ___ Appendix (required Data Worksheet; other material optional - limited to 5 pages)

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.

Degree Completion Award Application Packet

Cover Page

Institutional Contact Information

Date Submitted: mm/dd/yyyy

Name of Institution:

Name of Initiative/Program:

Primary Institution Contacts: Full Name,
Title,
Address,
Phone Number,
Email Address

Abstract

Provide an overview of the initiative/program being submitted for consideration. Abstracts should be no more than 250 words, double-spacing throughout. Abstracts may be used on APLU websites and publications.

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Section 1:

Institutional Context, Problem Statement, & Significance of Effort (10%)

Describe the institutional context and significance of the undergraduate 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 description 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 issue or barrier being addressed with supporting evidence, such as:
 - Explain the barrier experienced by students and how that barrier affects their retention or graduation.
 - If the barrier affects a specific subpopulation, describe that group's size or characteristics.
- Discuss the degree completion outcomes or leading indicators selected for improvement (e.g., completion rates, year-to-year retention rates, degrees awarded, time to degree, achievement gaps) and the rationale for these choices.

Section 2:

Description of Initiative & Approach Rationale (15%)

Describe the initiative that resulted in improvements in student success outcomes. Provide a rationale of the approach that was chosen and what the initiative was designed to do. Consider including the following information:

- Goals and objectives of the initiative and how these goals were related to the issue or barrier being addressed.
- 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 issue or barrier 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 reasonably comparable or control group).
- Initial investment or start-up costs as well as ongoing costs to continue the initiative or program. What return on this investment has in the institution experienced? A cost analysis may be included in the Appendix.

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Section 3:

Description of Implementation & Institutional Change Process (15%)

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?
- What institutional change strategy was used to successfully implement the initiative?
 - How were key stakeholders identified and then engaged in the implementation of the initiative/program?
 - What systemic barriers needed to be addressed to implement the initiative and what tools or institutional levers were used to mitigate these barriers?
 - What cultural change was necessary to implement this initiative and how was that accomplished?

Section 4:

Evidence & Impact 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. Please provide commentary on whether the goals (provided in Section 1) were met and provide detailed discussion of the outcomes associated with each goal. This section must be accompanied by the Institutional 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, student metrics that show improvement in completion rates and leading indicators 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.

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Section 5:

Sustainability of Initiative, Lessons Learned, & Scalability (20%)

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

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

Letter of Endorsement from President/Chancellor

Please provide a letter of endorsement from the institution's president or chancellor. The letter should identify the primary contact person for the application (including name, title, email address, and phone number). The letter should be brief, but may include information regarding the institution's mission, student success goals, or overall strategy related to improving retention and graduation outcomes.

Appendices

All submission **must** include Appendix A: Institutional Data Worksheet.

Optional appendices may include references (APA citation format), tables, charts, images, etc. and are limited to an additional 5 pages. Reviewers are not required to review additional materials.

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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 included as additional tables in the Appendix or within Section 4. APLU encourages the use of inclusive completion rates that count all students. Please provide notes on how variables are operationalized.*

<i>Institutional Characteristics</i>	<u>BASELINE</u>		<u>Intervention</u>					
	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 ¹)*								
# 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*								
<u>(Other): 1st to 2nd Year Retention Rate</u>								

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)								
<u>(Other) : 4 yr. Completion Rate (your inst)</u>								
<u>(Other) : 4 yr. Completion Rate (another inst)</u>								

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) *								

¹ Students of Color (SOC) is defined as students who are US Citizens or Permanent US Residents, and who belong to one of the following racial/ethnic groups: Black/African American, Latinx/Hispanic, Asian, Native American, Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander, Middle Eastern, and Two or More Races

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Pell 6 yr. Completion Rate (another inst)								
<i>(Other): 6 yr. Completion Rate (your inst)</i>								
<i>(Other): 6 yr. Completion Rate (another inst)</i>								