



Coalition of
Urban Serving Universities

Annual Progress Report

JULY 2020





The Coalition of Urban Serving Universities (USU)

is a president-led network of 37 public urban research universities working to drive transformational change throughout their institutions and the communities they serve.

BY THE NUMBERS



37
Universities

*located
across . . .*



22
States

Enrolling a total of

1,069,639
Students

44%
Pell Recipients

52%
Racial/Ethnic
Minority Students

20%
Adult Learners
(>25)

Executive Summary Year in Highlights

In these challenging times, the Coalition of Urban Serving Universities has had a year it can be proud of. We were able to pivot to quickly meet the needs of our members, delivering weekly presidents calls, regular provost and member calls, and an innovative summer meeting that allowed us to explore different ways to respond to the multiple challenges we face. The following are this year's highlights.

Managed \$12,253,78 in multi-year grant funding from six funding agencies supporting seven current initiatives.

- **FUNDERS:** Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, Lumina Foundation, Department of Education's Institute for Education Science, Raikes Foundation, Kresge Foundation, Michael and Susan Dell Foundation and the California Wellness Foundation.
- **INITIATIVES:** Collaborative Opportunity Grants, Frontier Set, Completion Grants, Student Experience Project, Credentials Pathways Project, Social Determinants of Health and the Diversity Inclusion Culture and Climate Assessment Toolkit.
- **REACH:** Thirty-one members (85 percent of current membership) participated in these seven initiatives.

Published [*The University Role in Creating a Resilient City: An Annotated Bibliography*](#), which provides a literature review on how the university and university-city partnerships can advance local resiliency. The report is the result of our Smart Resilient Cities Working Group.

Added dismantling institutional racism as a USU priority, using the summer meeting and member interviews to gather data to design a new effort we will launch later this year.

Designed the 21st Century Skills initiative but delayed the launch until FY21 in response to Covid 19.

Leadership



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President, University at Albany, SUNY
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President, Florida International University
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Membership



Joseph I. Castro, President, California State University, Fresno

William Covino, President, California State University, Los Angeles

Dianne Harrison, President, California State University, Northridge

Harlan M. Sands, President, Cleveland State University

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Mark Becker, President, Georgia State University

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David Wilson, President, Morgan State University

Stephen Percy, President, Portland State University

Nancy Cantor, Chancellor, Rutgers University–Newark

Mary A. Papazian, President, San Jose State University

Havidán Rodríguez, President, SUNY, University at Albany

Wayne Riley, President, SUNY, Downstate Medical Center

Richard M. Englert, President, Temple University

Kristina M. Johnson, President, The Ohio State University

Ray L. Watts, President, University of Alabama at Birmingham

Kim Wilcox, Chancellor, University of California, Riverside

Alexander Cartwright., President, University of Central Florida

Neville Pinto, President, University of Cincinnati

Michelle Marks, Chancellor, University of Colorado–Denver

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Taylor Eighmy, President, University of Texas at San Antonio

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Mark Pagano, Chancellor, University of Washington, Tacoma

Mark Mone, Chancellor, University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee

Michael Rao, President, Virginia Commonwealth University

M. Roy Wilson, President, Wayne State University



USU Initiatives Progress, Results & Outlook

We are pleased to see our partnerships continue to prosper, our initiatives evolve, and our membership grow. This year, we managed \$12,253,798 in multi-year grant funding from six funding agencies supporting 31 USU institutions (85 percent of membership) across seven initiatives. Note that the participation level is less than originally planned because several activities were delayed or cancelled due to the COVID-19.

This annual report summarizes the progress and results of our initiatives in 2019–2020: Collaborative Opportunity Grant, Frontier Set, Diversity and Inclusion Culture and Climate Assessment Toolkit, Credentials Pathways Project, Student Experience Project, Completion Grants and Social Determinants of Health.



Initiative 1. Collaborative Opportunity Grant

WHAT: Our Collaborative Opportunity Grant is a seed fund from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and the Kresge Foundation to support university partnerships to scale innovative practices in six areas: (1) engaging faculty; (2) rethinking financial aid; (3) leveraging community assets; (4) aligning and engaging employers; (5) strengthening K–16 systems; and (6) non-traditional partnerships that align and improve student achievement.

HOW: The initiative is in its final year in which all award holders were invited to participate in a Summer Meeting at Wayne State University in July 2019. As part of the grant, campus teams received technical assistance to develop stronger capacity to institutionalize and advocate for their respective student success projects.

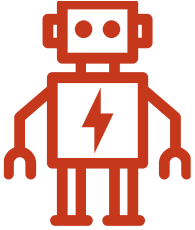
Specific deliverables included:

- Pro forma templates/examples that detail project cost distributions both at present and forecasted over time
- Pitch decks in which teams succinctly communicate the value proposition of the student success effort and associated return on investment (ROI)
- Blogs, op-eds, and report features

WHO: Collaborative Opportunity Grant (COG) institutions pilot student-centered institutional transformation through external partnerships. This network includes the universities and their external partners: community colleges, K–12 districts, employers, and community-based organizations.

Participating institutions include:

- California State University, Fresno
- California State University, Los Angeles
- California State University, Northridge
- Cleveland State University
- Georgia State University
- University at Albany (SUNY)
- University of California, Riverside
- University of Cincinnati
- University of Maryland Baltimore County
- University of New Orleans
- The University of Memphis
- University of Texas at San Antonio
- University of Toledo
- University of Washington, Tacoma
- University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee
- Wayne State University
- **Coming in FY21:** A new COG initiative, funded by the Michael and Susan Dell Foundation will launch in the upcoming fiscal year. This effort will support 12 institutions and their collaborative partnerships to address 21st Century Skills acquisition.



Initiative 2. Frontier Set

WHAT: The Frontier Set is the second component of a \$4.8 million Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation (BMGF) Grant. The Frontier Set is a group of high-performing colleges, universities and state systems committed to increasing student success and erasing attainment gaps by transforming how they operate. USU works with three sites as part of this project. The first grant ended this year, but has been renewed until 2021.

HOW: Frontier Set members work to creating student-centered missions, data informed decision-making, collaborative environments, and commitment to goals and continual improvement. USU's work with Frontier Set Institutions centers on achieving two major outcomes:

- Increase performance on near-term student success Key Performance Indicators; and
- Contribute knowledge and understanding to the body of knowledge of institutional transformation

WHO:

- Florida International University
- Georgia State University
- Portland State University

Coming in FY21: In FY 2020-21, there will be two deliverables: (1) three case studies with research questions related to the sites' context and understanding of university transformation as urban serving universities, with a specific focus on their efforts and responses to COVID-19 and the social uprising against systemic racism; and (2) graphic representation with short summaries that correspond with how the sites are currently engaging in continuous improvement activities and processes.



Initiative 3. Diversity and Inclusion Culture and Climate Assessment Toolkit

WHAT: USU/APLU and AAMC partnered on a three-year effort to develop and pilot a Diversity and Inclusion Culture and Climate Self-Assessment Toolkit and Scorecard at four California-based institutions.

HOW: This project finalized in FY2020. Sites completed action plans based on the results of their campus-wide assessment, with funding from the project. An annotated bibliography and case studies were developed in the Fall 2019 that will be featured as part of the toolkit.

WHO:

- California State University, Fullerton
- California State University, Northridge
- University of California, Davis
- University of California, San Francisco

Coming in FY21: The toolkit and scorecard is being transferred to a software platform on the AAMC website with advanced privacy standards. Due to be available in 2021 for broader use.



Initiative 4. Credential Pathways Project

WHAT A partnership with APLU, USU, and Workcred, an affiliate of ANSI focused on strengthening workforce quality by improving the credentialing system, and the University Professional and Continuing Education Association (UPCEA). This project aims to connect degrees and certifications that result in new credential pathways and thereby create more opportunities for students to earn credentials with labor-market value.

HOW: In FY 2020, we held six regional, industry specific/theme centered convenings that brought together universities and credentialing organizations for workshop style discussions focused on certifications relevant to the convening theme. The convenings were held at different APLU/USU universities and Lumina Headquarters to ensure faculty, leadership, and other institutional members were able to participate in the conversations.

WHO (USU Members):

- California State University-Northridge
- Cleveland State University
- Florida International University
- Fresno State University
- Georgia State University
- Indiana University–Purdue University Indianapolis
- Morgan State University
- San Jose State University
- The Ohio State University
- University at Albany, SUNY

- University of Alabama, Birmingham
- University of California-Riverside
- University of Cincinnati
- University of Colorado, Denver
- University of Illinois at Chicago
- University of Memphis
- University of North Carolina at Charlotte
- University of North Texas
- University of Texas, Arlington
- University of Texas, San Antonio
- University of Washington, Tacoma
- University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee
- Virginia Commonwealth University
- Wayne State University

Coming in FY21: The participating organizations submitted a report to the Lumina foundation detailing the outcomes, learnings, and findings from the six convenings to inform a possible Phase 2 grant opportunity. The report included a framework and updated logic model on what we've learned about embedding certifications into bachelor's degrees and what a Phase 2 could encompass. We intend to submit a Phase 2 grant in late FY21.



Initiative 5. Completion Grants

WHAT: Nine USU members and two APLU members participate in a research practice partnership led by Temple University to evaluate and expand completion grant programs. Completion Grants are microgrants (\$1,000-\$2,000) distributed by universities to support students with unmet financial need but academically on track to graduate within a year who have an unpaid university balance.

HOW: In fall 2018, participating campuses distributed a total of 2,200 completion grants to their students. A research team at Temple and APLU/USU, using a random controlled trial, will be evaluating the results of these programs over the next two years. Data collection for the first year has been completed, and analysis is underway.

WHO:

- Arizona State University
- Colorado State University, Denver
- Florida International University
- Florida State University
- Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis
- Portland State University
- University of Illinois, Chicago
- University of Memphis

- University of North Carolina Charlotte
- University of Rutgers-Newark
- Virginia Commonwealth University

Coming in FY21: This fall we will be sharing the initial results from the first data collection effort and launching the second year of data collection. The study will follow students who received the grant and the control group for three years.



Initiative 6. Student Experience Project

WHAT: The Student Experience Project is a research practice partnership funded by the Raikes Foundation to investigate and address the ways in which students' experiences of their learning environments (e.g. the messages and signals they receive on campus and in the classroom) impact success in gateway STEM particularly for students who have been historically disadvantaged or underserved. Partners include College Transition Collaborative (CTC), the Project for Education Research that Scales, EducationCounsel, and Shift Results.

HOW: USU and our national learning partners conducted site visits at each cohort campus, which included meetings and focus groups with STEM students, faculty, and staff. Each site received a comprehensive report with student outcome data and campus survey results. Cohort campuses decided to prioritize increasing supportive instructor and course interactions as a path to improving student experience; USU supported the cohort institutions in recruiting faculty to participate in this aspect of the project in Fall 2020. USU also continued to support the Peer Learning Network (PLN) of twelve institutions working to explore the ways in which messages and communications delivered by faculty on the first day of class impact students' sense of belonging, growth mindset, and purpose.

WHO:

Research Practice Cohort

- University of New Mexico
- University of Colorado at Denver
- University of Toledo
- University of North Carolina Charlotte
- Portland State University

- Colorado State University

Peer Learning Network

- Cleveland State University
- Florida International University
- Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis
- Middle Tennessee State
- Morgan State University
- North Carolina A&T
- University of Rutgers-Newark
- University of North Texas
- University of Texas, San Antonio
- University of the Virgin Islands
- Wayne State University
- West Virginia State University

Coming in FY2021: At each cohort campus, a group of STEM gateway faculty will implement a number of classroom practices to bolster student engagement, increase equity in academic outcomes, and support students' success. Faculty will regularly survey their students about their sense of belonging, self-efficacy, identify safety, social connectedness, and other aspects of student experience. Faculty will use disaggregated student data to understand disparities in experiences among students who are structurally disadvantaged in STEM disciplines. Cohort universities can also elect to participate in "innovation labs" to improve early alerts processes or the virtual STEM environment.



Initiative 7. Social Determinants of Health

WHAT: The project's goal was to bring urban universities and their communities together around innovative approaches to improving social determinants of health by growing institutional capacity for innovation and collaboration. After participating in a workshop led by Drew Boyd, a national leader on the systematic inventive process, member institutions worked in cross-disciplinary teams within their institutions and communities to design innovative solutions to social determinants of health.

HOW: The project was designed with three components: 1) Innovation workshop, 2) Learning community, and 3) Awareness campaign. The innovation workshop was held in September at the University of Cincinnati and was attended by 20 USU member institutions. The learning community element was reimagined as a series of conference calls and summits in which institutions could share their progress. As the COVID-19 pandemic disrupted the work of many of the participants working in the health space, the calls were again re-imagined as informal drop in conversations to discuss how institutions were adjusting their health work to address the impacts of the pandemic. Three calls were held between April and May. In June, USU hosted a virtual summit on resilience in a time of disruption. The keynote speaker with Andre LeDuc from the University of Oregon.

WHO:

- Arizona State University
- California State University, Northridge
- Cleveland State University
- Florida International University
- Georgia State University
- San Jose State University
- SUNY Downstate Health Sciences University
- University at Albany
- University of California, Riverside
- University of Cincinnati
- University of Illinois at Chicago
- University of Maryland, Baltimore County
- University of New Mexico
- University of North Carolina, Charlotte
- University of North Texas
- University of Toledo
- University of Texas, Arlington
- University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee
- Virginia Commonwealth University
- Wayne State University

Coming in FY21: As of June 2020, the awareness campaign component has been put on hold while this initiative is restructured.

USU in FY21

USU is launching two new initiatives in FY 21

1 Dismantling Institutional Racism

In FY21, USU will launch an initiative to dismantle institutional racism. Our goal is to work together to address long-held institutional barriers to the success of historically marginalized students. We are in the design phase, gathering research and feedback from members. We will launch this effort in early Fall. Watch for opportunities to engage.

2. 21st Century Skills

This new initiative, funded by the Michael and Susan Dell Foundation will launch later this fall. This effort will support 12 institutions and their collaborative partnerships to address 21st Century Skills acquisition.

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