



APLU'S

POWERED BY PUBLICS

SCALING STUDENT SUCCESS

130 Institutions Scaling Student Success Across the Nation

Powered by Publics Learning Memo: The Metropolitan Cluster

Each cluster in [APLU's Powered by Publics initiative](#) is working to refine, implement, and scale innovative practices that address shared challenges among the participating institutions. This memo highlights universities in the Metropolitan Cluster (a list of institutions in this cluster at the end of this memo).

The cluster is led by Vistasp Karbhari, President of the University of Texas at Arlington. Members of the Metropolitan Cluster are focusing on achieving equitable student outcomes through evidence-based practices. Campus teams have identified seven potential intervention areas in which to engage. To get started on a strong footing, President Karbhari called each president in his cluster and collectively narrowed that agenda to two critical interventions: 1) integrated and coordinated services across campus as well as 2) intrusive and proactive advising. The cluster also identified mentoring and financial literacy as necessary through-lines throughout both interventions.

Within these two interventions, cluster members have already identified signature practices they have adopted at their institutions. Below is a sampling:

Integrated Services

- [The University at Albany's Embedded Student Success Centers](#), located in first-year living areas and the campus union, feature peer tutoring services, academic workshops to help students build core skills, as well as programming that connects students with the surrounding community.
- [The University of Texas at Arlington's A Community That Cares](#) initiative serves as an umbrella for integrated services. Some of the programming within this integration include the following:
 - The [I.D.E.A.S. Center](#) provides peer mentoring, just-in-time tutoring, and faculty development, with after-hours and weekend services and a particular emphasis on serving transfer and other at-risk students.
 - [Emergency Assistance Programming](#) for students experiencing financial, housing, food, or other insecurities.
 - The [Maverick Advantage](#) works to increase student engagement through robust student opportunities for experiential learning and other high-impact practice activities.

Financial Aid Strategies with Strategic Practice

- [Wichita State University's Office of Student Money Management](#) provides peer financial coaches who can help students develop a financial plan to accompany their degree plan, create budgets, establish credit history, manage identity theft, complete their taxes, as well as understand and plan for student loan repayment, among other services.
- [Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis's online college expense budget tool](#), used in first-year seminars, helps students budget for enrollment, room and board, course materials, travel expenses, and personal expenses. The tool also helps students account for various sources of funding, including students' contribution to their education and financial aid programs.

Proactive Advising

- [The University of Louisville's Student Success Coaches](#) are assigned to at-risk populations and help students navigate barriers to their success. The coaches work collaboratively with faculty, advisors, and other student success staff to help students overcome academic, personal, or financial difficulties.
- [Wichita State University's centralized advising and "push" enrollment](#) for traditional freshmen. The program provides centralized first-year advisors to provide new students with a custom schedule based on answers they submit in response to advising questions. Students can either accept the schedule or request a meeting with an advisor to discuss changes. The program coordinates across orientation, first-year advisors, the registrar, and IT.

Mentoring

- [The University of Cincinnati's Peer Education Network](#) uses student-led programming that's coordinated across tour guides, orientation leaders, tutors, residence hall advisers, and career coaches to mentor students and help adjust to college and overcome challenges in their college career.

Other Resources

www.mycollegemoneyplan.org is a free website educating prospective students and families on how to choose the best college they can afford.

APLU's [learning brief on completion grants](#). Completion Grants, also referred to as retention grants or gap grants, address the issue of unmet need for students who have exhausted their financial resources, are on track to graduation within the year, and have a financial gap that will cause them to drop out. Typically, completion grants amounts are a few hundred dollars and help students make the necessary tuition payments to graduate. APLU produced [the learning brief](#) on what we have learned working with our members to disseminate this strategy.

[The Lumina Foundation's Beyond Financial Aid](#) toolkit helps universities better serve low-income students and close the attainment gaps including self-assessment and an action planning guide. The toolkit expands our understanding of affordability beyond financial supports to include basic needs and prompts our thinking on integrating financial aid with strategic practices.

Institutions in the Metropolitan Cluster:

- Indiana University – Purdue University Indianapolis
- Old Dominion University
- Portland State University
- The University of Texas at Arlington
- University at Albany
- University of Cincinnati
- University of Houston
- University of Illinois at Chicago
- University of Louisville
- University of Missouri-Kansas City
- University of New Mexico
- Wichita State University