

ADVANCING EQUITY & UNIVERSITY TRANSFORMATION DURING MAJOR CHANGES

Public urban research universities continue to face a host of challenging inflection points, from senior leadership transitions to mergers to shifts to performance-based state funding, to name just a few. How institutions can continue to advance institutional transformation during these pivotal moments is critical to their long-term success in achieving equity and increasing student success.

To help institutions successfully navigate these challenges and ultimately thrive, the Association of Public and Land-grant Universities (APLU) and the Coalition of Urban Serving Universities (USU) worked with Florida International University, Georgia State University, and Portland State University as part of the [Frontier Set](#) initiative funded by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.

The Frontier Set seeks to understand how to successfully advance transformational change amid senior leadership transitions, institutional mergers, and performance-based state funding models. APLU and USU are releasing in-depth case studies as roadmaps with insights to help other institutions address these shifts.

Through strategic and tactical efforts, the Frontier Set participating universities and partnering organizations explored the why and how of institutional transformation. The three APLU and USU universities present separate, unique case studies to understand transformational change frameworks through different institutional contexts.

THE FRONTIER SET IS A SELECT GROUP OF HIGH-PERFORMING, HIGH-POTENTIAL COLLEGES, UNIVERSITIES, STATE SYSTEMS AND PARTNERING ORGANIZATIONS COMMITTED TO ELIMINATING RACE, ETHNICITY, AND INCOME AS PREDICTORS OF STUDENT SUCCESS BY TRANSFORMING HOW INSTITUTIONS OPERATE.

Collectively, the content of the three university case studies highlight the integral role of leveraging current practices while developing and expanding on new methods to meet the needs of students, staff, and faculty.

THE UNIVERSITY CASE STUDIES CONTRIBUTE KNOWLEDGE ON INSTITUTIONAL TRANSFORMATION TO THE FIELD WITH A SPECIFIC FOCUS ON:

- 1) Highlighting how tailored support on advising, digital learning, faculty engagement, course redesign and other critical elements can enable post-secondary institutions to systematize and scale student success efforts; and
- 2) Building a knowledge base on transformational change across different institutional context as the case study topics apply to all institutions

CASE STUDY BREAKDOWN

Georgia State University: *How does an institutional merger affect transformational change?*

There are only a handful of examples that speak to a broader trend in higher education—a movement to merge institutions, particularly those that are resource constrained and/or underperforming, in an effort to improve student success rates and to contain costs. Consolidation of two or more institutions—with distinct cultures, mindsets, resources, and students—inevitably impacts the pace and strategies deployed in institutional transformation.

Portland State University: *How does senior leadership transition affect transformational change?*

Leadership stands as one of the core functional capacities that drives and informs transformational change. Senior leaders set a tone and vision for student success and accordingly wield considerable influence on how other functional capacities work together to achieve institutional goals. Yet, unlike other core capacities, leadership often serves as the greatest risk to stalling or slowing change as a result of turnover.

Florida International University: *How does state performance-based funding affect transformational change?*

More than half of states use some form of performance-based funding in their policy and decision-making process with respect

to allocating resources to higher education institutions.¹ The state of Florida reported across the board gains in graduation rates among public institutions over the course of five years as a result of their initial performance-based funding formula.²

In addition to the three case studies, APLU and USU are developing an open-access course module based on the content of the case studies and its institutional transformation experiences. The modules will be grounded in change management, student experience, and the utilization of strategic foresight. This additional knowledge dissemination method will contribute to the institutional commitment to increasing student success and addressing opportunity and attainment equity gaps via a culture of innovation and transformation that is of value for the field.

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¹ No precise number exists but there is evidence that over 30 states use some form of performance-based funding.

² [Performance-based funding spurs progress in graduation rates, alumni wages | Florida | thecentersquare.com](https://www.thecentersquare.com/performance-based-funding-spurs-progress-in-graduation-rates-alumni-wages-florida/)



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