



Frequently Asked Questions About the Powered by Publics: Scaling Student Success Initiative

Why is this initiative launching now?

The United States needs many more college-educated adults to meet labor market demands for a skilled workforce and to remain competitive globally. According to the Georgetown Center on Education in the Workforce, more than 65 percent of all jobs available in 2020 will require some postsecondary education. Yet the United States today ranks 10th in postsecondary attainment globally, with 47 percent of working-age residents holding a college credential.

Higher education must increase college access, improve equity, and advance student success to ensure the United States has the human capital it needs to remain the world's most innovative and competitive economy. College attainment is an increasingly powerful predictor of one's economic mobility, making increasing access to college and eliminating the achievement gap key to addressing inequality and ensuring a vibrant American Dream for the 21st Century.

Against this backdrop, momentum has been building in the higher education community to improve college access, equity, and completion. Pathbreaking institutions have provided models of student-centered institutional reforms and the wider higher education sector is keenly interested in learning about their successes – and building on their progress to magnify the results of their impact.

What is the value of institutions collaborating?

Obstacles to student success are often common across universities. Collaboration helps institutions refine and implement proven student success strategies. Change is hard and there's real power in numbers. Institutions can catalyze change on their campus far more effectively together than they could on their own. Through their work, the Powered by Publics institutions can collectively create a playbook for implementing reforms that advance student success.

How will institutions and clusters collaborate?

Institutions will work collaboratively in their clusters of four to 12 institutions to refine, implement, and scale student practices that have been shown to improve student success. The cluster structure will help universities make knowledge actionable and relevant to their specific institutional contexts. The clusters will adapt practices, processes, and policies to fit local circumstances.

The institutions will leverage existing meetings to work in peer groups on their work. The clusters will also collaborate among themselves, sharing what they've learned about the process of institutional change and lessons they've learned in tackling different pieces of the student success puzzle.

What is the profile of students being educated at participating institutions?

As a result of the initiative's size and the diversity of the participating institutions, there is significant diversity in the types of students being educated at the participating institutions. Below are some characteristics of students being educated through Powered by Publics institutions:

- **34 percent**, or more **1 million students**, receive Pell Grants;
- **32 percent** of students transferred into their current university from another institution of higher education;
- **16 percent** of students are enrolled part-time.

The participating institutions enroll **29 percent** of all undergraduate students at four-year institutions and confer **33 percent** of all degrees awarded at four-year institutions. In all, **3 million students** are enrolled at Powered by Publics participating institutions.

What data will be shared through the initiative?

A central part of the Powered by Publics initiative will be evaluating the clusters' work as it progresses and gleaning insights about what efforts and processes work. Equally important, the initiative will examine data across a variety of institutional contexts, studying the variation in implementation and outcomes.

As the initiative progresses, Powered by Publics will share cluster- and initiative-level retention and graduation figures. Drawing lessons from this data, APLU will promulgate lessons about implementing proven practices in effort to spur lasting change – not just at the participating institutions, but across the higher education sector as a whole.

What collaborative work will institutions undertake?

The clusters are still in the process of working to identify their work areas. Cluster focus areas will be announced at a later date. Some clusters, however, have identified anticipated work areas. One cluster expects to work collaboratively to integrate data collection systems across each of their campuses to better monitor student progress and make data-informed decisions. Another cluster expects to tackle financial aid and student financial literacy. And another cluster plans to work to integrate career advising early into students' academic journeys to both speed the path to a degree and better prepare students for the workforce.

What institutions are participating in the initiative and in what clusters will they be groups?

The full list of institutions participating and the list of transformation clusters they will be working in is [available here](#).