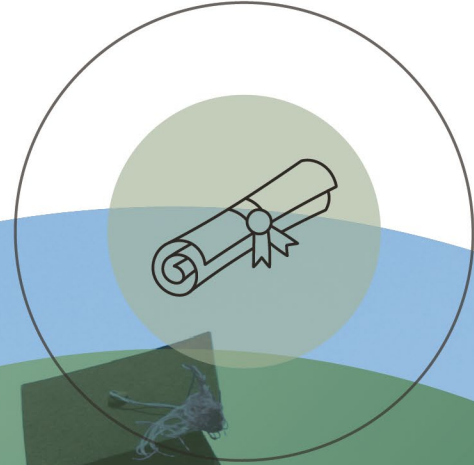




ASSOCIATION OF  
PUBLIC &  
LAND-GRANT  
UNIVERSITIES

# DEGREE COMPLETION AWARD

APPLICATION PACKET  
SUBMISSION DEADLINE:  
SEPTEMBER 1, 2023



# 2023

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

1. Recognize and reward public universities for increasing degree completion rates and total numbers of degrees awarded.
2. Recognize institutional improvement in access, quality, and equity.
3. Collect evidenced-based models from public universities that other institutions may adapt.
4. Mobilize universities to prioritize efforts to increase student success and degree completion outcomes.

### Application and Award Timeline

<b>May 31 @1:00pm</b>	<b>Application Opens</b>	
June 21 @1:00pm ET	Virtual Q&A Session 1	<a href="#">Register</a>
July 6 @1:00pm ET	Virtual Q&A Session 2	<a href="#">Register</a>
<b>September 1 @8:00pm ET</b>	<b>Applications Due</b>	
October 4	Finalists Announced	
November 12	Finalists showcased at APLU Annual Meeting	
<b>November 13</b>	<b>Winner Announced at APLU Annual Meeting</b>	

**Bold indicates significant date**

### Eligibility

The APLU Degree Completion Award is open to all APLU member institutions. Previous award winners and finalists are not eligible to apply in the two years immediately following receipt of the award.

### Review Committee and Process

Applications for the award are reviewed by a committee representing APLU member institutions, higher education leaders, and other partners. Each application undergoes a blind review before advancing to several rounds of evaluative discussion across the committee. Following the applicant review process, the committee may select **up to five finalists and one winner** for the 2023 Degree Completion Award.

### **Finalist Announcement and Responsibilities**

Finalists will be announced on October 5<sup>th</sup>, and highlighted publicly through APLU’s social media accounts, member newsletter, and other communication channels. 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 at the APLU Annual Meeting in Seattle, Washington November 12 – 14, 2023. These presentations will last 8 – 10 mins and may be led by 1-2 institutional representatives.

### **Degree Completion Award Winner Announcement and Responsibilities**

The winner of the Degree Completion Award will be announced at APLU’s 2023 Annual Meeting in Seattle, Washington at the APLU, and highlighted publicly through APLU’s social media accounts, member newsletter, and other communication channels. Winning campuses are also eligible for a visit from APLU President, Mark Becker. The visit could, at the winning university’s discretion, include a media event to which local elected officials and others could be invited to celebrate the Degree Completion Award and the institution’s leadership in driving student success.

### **Rubric**

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%)

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### **Resubmission of 2022 Degree Completion Award Applications**

2022 applicants who wish to reapply with the same program/initiative may do so by submitting an updated Institution Data Worksheet (located in Appendix B 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.

### **Submission Requirements (Due September 1, 2023, 8pm EDT)**

The Degree Completion Award application must be submitted by email to [DegreeCompletion@aplu.org](mailto: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?**

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## Submission Instructions

- Complete Degree Completion Award applications must be submitted electronically to [DegreeCompletion@aplu.org](mailto:DegreeCompletion@aplu.org) as a single PDF file.
- Applications should be formatted as specified below
  - Sections 1-5 are not to exceed **10 pages** (i.e., page limit excludes cover page, and appendices which include Letter of Endorsement from President or Chancellor, and data worksheet).

## 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.*

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**Cover Page**

**Institutional Contact Information**

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*Date Submitted:*

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*Name of Institution:*

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*Name of Initiative/Program:*

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*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.

## **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. Identify and demonstrate the problem intended to be addressed by the initiative and discuss its significance for your institution.

#### **Consider including the following information:**

1. A brief description of the institutional context.
  - Mission of institution
  - Institution type (i.e., Historically Black College or University, Hispanic-Serving Institution, Land-Grant University, etc.)
  - Student body characteristics (e.g., racial/ethnic composition, number/percent low-income or Pell-grant students, etc.)
  - Admissions criteria (i.e., standardized test scores, average high school GPA, etc.)
2. Describe an issue on your campus and its effects on retention and/or graduation.
  - If the barrier affects a specific subpopulation of students (e.g., Latinx male identified students, Pell-students, etc.), describe that group's size or characteristics.

## **Section 2:**

### **Initiative Description & Approach Rationale (15%)**

Describe an initiative that resulted in improvements in student success outcomes at your institution. Provide a rationale of why initiative was chosen and the initiative's design.

#### **Consider including the following information:**

1. Goals and objectives of the initiative.
  - How these goals were related to the issue or barrier being addressed.
2. How the initiative differs from previous efforts to improve student success outcomes.
3. Alignment between this initiative and the issue or barrier addressed in Section 1.
4. How the results of the initiative were assessed.
  - Include why certain data or metrics were used to determine effectiveness.
  - Include any comparative impact data rationale.  
(e.g., benchmarked data or a reasonably comparable or control group).
5. Initial investment or start-up costs and continuation costs of the initiative.

### **Section 3:**

#### **Description of Implementation & Institutional Change Process (15%)**

Summarize the implementation and institutional buy-in strategy. This summary should focus on the implementation process and highlight how the initiative garnered commitment from key stakeholders.

#### **Consider including the following information:**

1. An overview of the implementation plan and timeline.
2. Key factors enabled a successful implementation.
  - Any cultural changes which were needed and how were they achieved.
  - Any structural changes which were needed and how were they achieved.
3. Any change strategies or organizational change theories which aided your process.
  - How stakeholders were identified and engaged in the implementation process.
  - How systemic barriers were identified and addressed in the implementation process.

### **Section 4:**

#### **Evidence & Impact of Initiative (40%)**

Detail the outcomes of the initiative as they relate to retention and graduation metrics. Provide commentary on whether the programmatic goals (provided in Section 2) were met, and explicitly link which retention or graduation metric is associated with each programmatic goal. References to institutional metrics must be represented in the Institutional Data Worksheet (located in the Appendix). This sheet may be modified to include outcome variables of importance for this initiative.

#### **In addition to the Institutional Data Worksheet, consider including the following information:**

1. Description of evidence that demonstrates improvement in retention or graduation rates.
2. Identification and explanation of leading indicators that can be reasonably attributed to the initiative continued success.
3. Incorporation or explanation of quantitative and/or qualitative measure to demonstrate the outcomes achieved.
  - Trend data for periods before, during, and after the implementation of the initiatives or programs.
  - If initiative targeted a subset of students, provide parallel metrics for an appropriate comparison group.



## **Section 5:**

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

Explain institutional plans to sustain, modify, or expand the initiative. Include an overview of lessons learned during initiative implementation and considerations for broader scalability.

#### **Consider including the following information:**

1. 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.
2. Lessons Learned
  - The biggest challenge in implementing the initiative, and how the challenge was addressed.
  - The most important considerations for an institution wanting to replicate the initiative.
  - Any reflections on what could have been done differently and why.
3. 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?

### **Appendices:**

All submission **must** include Appendix A and B. Optional appendices may be added after Appendix B and must be appropriately marked (beginning with “Appendix C”). Additional appendices may include references (APA citation format), tables, charts, images, and are limited to an additional 2 pages (not including Appendix A and B).

### **Appendix A:**

#### **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.

**Appendix B:  
Institutional Data Worksheet.**

*Please provide at least one year of institution level baseline data, and at least three years of data demonstrating the outcome of 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.*

<b><i>Institutional Characteristics</i></b>	<b><u>BASELINE</u></b>		<b><u>Intervention</u></b>					
	<b>YEAR</b>	<b>YEAR</b>	<b>YEAR</b>	<b>YEAR</b>	<b>YEAR</b>	<b>YEAR</b>	<b>YEAR</b>	<b>YEAR</b>
Total Undergraduates (N)*								
% of N who are Students of Color (SOC) <sup>1*</sup>								
% of N who are Pell-Recipients (Pell)*								
% of N who are programs target (if applicable, <i>please list here</i> )								
Total Bachelor's Degrees Awarded (D)*								
% of D awarded to SOC*								
% of D awarded to Pell*								
% of D awarded to Other								
<b><i>Undergraduate 1<sup>st</sup> to 2<sup>nd</sup> Year Retention Rate</i></b>								
% of total undergraduates retained in 2 <sup>nd</sup> year*								
% of SOC retained in 2 <sup>nd</sup> year*								
% of Pell retained in 2 <sup>nd</sup> year*								
% of Other retained in 2 <sup>nd</sup> year								
<b><i>Undergraduate 4 Year Bachelor's Completion Rate</i></b>								
% of undergrads awarded bachelor's at your inst*								
% of undergrads awarded bachelor's at another inst								
% of SOC awarded bachelor's at your inst*								
% of SOC awarded bachelor's at another inst								
% of Pell awarded bachelor's at your inst*								
% of Pell awarded bachelor's at another inst								
% of Other awarded bachelor's at your inst*								
% of Other awarded bachelor's at another inst								

<sup>1</sup> 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/American Indian, Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander, Middle Eastern, and Two or More Races

<b><i>Undergraduate 6 Year Completion Rate</i></b>								
% of undergrads awarded bachelor's at your inst*								
% of undergrads awarded bachelor's at another inst								
% of SOC awarded bachelor's at your inst*								
% of SOC awarded bachelor's at another inst								
% of Pell awarded bachelor's at your inst*								
% of Pell awarded bachelor's at another inst								
% of Other awarded bachelor's at your inst*								
% of Other awarded bachelor's at another inst								
<b><i>Other Outcome (if applicable):</i></b>								
% of total undergraduates achieved								
% of SOC achieved								
% of Pell achieved								
% of Other achieved								