THE
Million dollar
COMMUNITY COLLEGE
CHALLENGE

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Lumina Foundation

THE MILLION DOLLAR COMMUNITY COLLEGE CHALLENGE

While there has been considerable focus on the size of marketing budgets at non-profit and for-profit colleges and universities, little attention has been paid to the need for marketing resources at community colleges, who have an increasing need to connect with their communities.

At most community colleges, the problem is not too much money being spent, but too little. Originally designed as open-access institutions serving multiple, distinct student populations, community colleges have traditionally relied on a "build it and hope they come" approach to enrollment. When funding does exist for marketing, it is typically scarce, and colleges often rely on general messages touting low tuition and the numerous program options.

These types of broad-based messages, while accurate, are often ineffective. They can contribute to confusion about who a college is and who it serves, and inaction in the educational marketplace. Simply put, there may be a disconnect between how the college sees itself and how the community sees the college. Unfortunately, community colleges often lack resources to launch sophisticated brand-building or marketing efforts that can make these vital connections.

Telling Your Story!

To address this issue, Lumina Foundation, in partnership with Noetic Consultants, is excited to announce a grant opportunity specifically aimed at supporting brand-building and marketing efforts for community colleges. By telling the story of what makes your college exceptional and what you uniquely have to offer your community, you could receive grant funds and technical assistance to design and shape your brand and execute a strategic marketing plan.

We Are Looking For

We seek community colleges with vision and commitment to improving their storytelling and connecting with their communities in a deeper way. Your college doesn't have to have all the know-how, but you must be willing to engage your community in creative and targeted ways that encourage adults to earn a credential.

We're not looking for bus ads, postcards and social media posts that offer generic messages. We want colleges that understand that awareness is not the core problem. We want those who know that, to increase enrollment, a college must be great—and community members must believe the college is great at helping **them** be great. Simply put, we are looking for colleges that know it takes more than spending money on marketing activities and tactics to yield results—colleges that think strategically about how to shape, improve, and amplify their college's brand.

Challenge Objectives

1. Scale community college brand-building and marketing efforts.

2. Provide resources and guidance for community colleges to elevate their brands.

3. Develop resources that improve the aspiration and implementation of equity-focused enrollment efforts at community colleges, with emphasis on adult students.

Who Can Apply?

- Public, two-year, nonprofit, regionally accredited community colleges in the United States.

- Individual community colleges only. System offices, district offices, state, or higher education agency offices, and community education partners are not eligible to apply.

- Institutions that employ members of Lumina Foundation's Board of Directors (or engage Lumina Board members in positions of leadership) *are not* eligible. See Official Rules for more information.

How Many Awards and How Much?

Ten (10) colleges will receive technical assistance to develop actionable brand-building and marketing strategies.

In addition to technical assistance:

- **9 colleges** will each receive $100,000 to support brand-building and strategic marketing efforts.
- **1 college** will receive $1 million to support brand-building and strategic marketing efforts.

The $1 million will be granted to a community college that best articulates a compelling vision for its brand and details a strategic way that grant funds will be used to transform marketing efforts to support the enrollment and retention of students. Awards can then be used to execute the college's plans to support marketing and outreach efforts that drive enrollment and support student/community engagement.

Technical assistance will be provided to all 10 colleges through virtual workshops, working sessions, and/or consulting hours. The dates and times to be determined with the finalists during the actual grant period.

Selection Criteria

Strong applications will demonstrate and clearly articulate:

1. Strategic enrollment goals, which are rooted in data and have specific emphasis on engaging adult learners and reducing equity gaps.

2. A current marketing plan that demonstrates strategic thinking rather than a tactical approach.

3. Comprehensive understanding of the community, workforce, and education/training needs in the college's service area.

4. A promise to adult students that outlines what they gain by attending and graduating from the college.

5. A strategic and comprehensive vision for transforming the college's brand and marketing efforts.

Current or past relationships with Lumina Foundation will not be factored into a college's eligibility or application scoring.

Application Steps

All community colleges:

1. **Download and review** The Million Dollar Community College Challenge Application (this document).

2. **Register to participate in one of the informational webinars prior to submitting the application.** For those unable to attend the live webinar, a recording will be available.

3. **Complete and submit the Written Application Narrative online.** Be sure to submit the president's letter of support and the college's W-9 for the application to be considered complete.

If your college is chosen as one of the 10 finalists and advances to round two, you will be contacted via email and asked to:

1. **Attend a 90-minute creative brief and messaging development training led by Noetic Consultants.** This training will help finalists prepare for the video narrative presentation that will be posted on Lumina Foundation's website.

2. **Upload the Video Narrative Submission online.** Finalists will create a video up to 2 minutes in length, using any media source of choice (e.g., still photography, graphics, text, etc.). Professional video production is not required. More detailed specifications will be provided to the 10 finalists during the creative brief and messaging development training led by Noetic Consultants.

Challenge Timeline

Timeline	Activity
February 9, 2022	Lumina releases The Million Dollar Community College Challenge Application
February 22 or 23	Community colleges attend at least one Informational Webinar (see registration information below)
March 15 (by 11:59 p.m. ET)	Community colleges submit Part I: Written Narrative Applications ***All eligible institutions may apply**
April 27	Lumina notifies 10 community colleges that they are finalists and are invited to submit Part II: Video Narrative ***By invitation only**
May 2, 3 or 5	Each of the 10 community college finalists attends one 90-minute, virtual creative brief and messaging training with Noetic Consultants. Three session times/dates will be offered.
June 10 (by 11:59 p.m. ET)	The 10 finalists submit their Part II: Video Narratives
August	Public announcement of award recipients Lumina selects the $1 million dollar award recipient and 9 $100,000 award recipients and completes the grant process
Starting August 2022	Award recipients receive technical assistance

Grant Timelines

$1 Million Dollar Award Recipient (1 award)

The grant period will run from August 2022 through August 2024. All grant funds must be expended within the 24-month grant period subject to terms and conditions set by Lumina. Recipient is required to submit midterm and final grant reports, and a final budget report.

$100,000 Award Recipients (9 awards)

The grant period will run from August 2022 through August 2023. All grant funds must be expended within the 12-month grant period subject to terms and conditions set by Lumina. Recipients are required to submit midterm and final grant reports, and a final budget report.

College Expectations

Selected colleges will be expected to prioritize their brand-building and marketing strategies with emphasis on adult learner enrollment and move with urgency to refine planning and scale implementation efforts. Each institution will be expected to actively participate in the technical assistance, use grant funds to help build capacity, and scale efforts.

Funding Usage Restrictions

Challenge awards may not be used to fund:

- Scholarships, creating scholarship funds, stipends, or other forms of direct financial support to students;

- Lobbying at the local, state, or federal levels, or to the general public;

- Attempting to influence legislation, influencing the outcome of any election, or registering voters;

- Faculty or staff salaries (unless those salaries are directly related to performing a marketing or communications job function at the college); or

- General college travel, professional development, or other costs unrelated to this grant.

Lumina intends that grant funds be used to further develop colleges' capacity, data systems, sustainable process, policy, workflows, resources, programs, services, external marketing and communication efforts, collateral, events, or technology applications that improve brand development and marketing execution in support of adult student enrollments at the institution. Staffing of marketing and communications related positions is allowable.

A grant budget will be required for all college grants, as will mid-year, final grant reports and a final budget report.

Terms and Conditions

Official Challenge rules can be found in The Million Dollar Community College Challenge Rules document and on the Challenge website. Colleges that submit applications acknowledge they have read the official rules and agree to the terms therein.
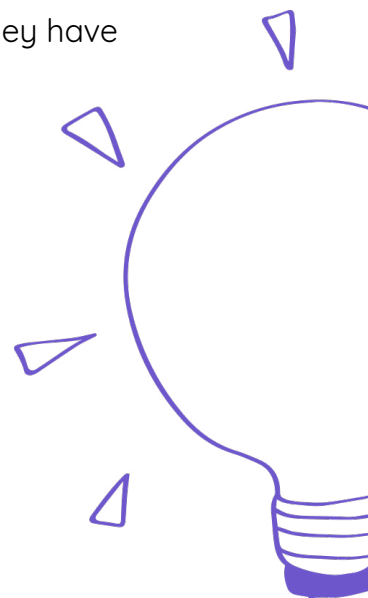
Award Announcements

Finalists and the Challenge winner may not make any announcement of their selection or any grant award without the express consent of Lumina Foundation. Failure to comply with this policy may void the college's eligibility, application and/or potential grant award.

Informational Webinars

Lumina and Noetic Consultants will host webinars to discuss the Challenge and answer questions. The webinars will be recorded and available for later viewing.

Feb. 22 at 11 a.m. ET

Register here

Feb. 23 at 3 p.m. ET

Register here

Prospective applicants who have questions prior to submitting an application may pose them via email to challenge@luminafoundation.org.

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READY TO APPLY?

Please complete the application online
www.luminafoundation.org/challenge

PROPOSAL APPLICATION

The application consists of a narrative proposal and a letter of support from your college's president, and your college's W-9. **This form is for review purposes only. You must fill out the application to the challenge online.**

Written Narrative Application

Institutional & Application Contact Information:

Community College Name

Street Address

City

State

Zip/Postal

EIN or Tax ID Number

Community College Website

Links to existing College social media

Your Name

Your Role

Your Email

Your Phone Number

Additional Contact Information

Who is responsible for marketing at your college?

_____

Name

_____

Role

_____

Email

_____

Phone Number

_____

College President's Name

_____

College President's Email Address

College Mission Statement

College Vision Statement

Please answer the following questions concisely.

Strategic Enrollment Goals

What are your college's strategic enrollment goals? How do these goals relate to equity and adult students? Please include data in your response.

300 word limit

Strategic Enrollment Challenges

What challenges must you address to achieve these goals? What strategies could be used to address these challenges?

> 300 word limit

Marketing Plan

How have you approached marketing efforts? Do you have a formalized marketing plan? If so, what are its key elements and who is responsible for this plan?

> 300 word limit

Marketing Outreach

How do your current marketing and outreach efforts support enrollment and retention?

> 300 word limit

Community Description

Tell us about the community in the college's service area. Provide information that will help illustrate the primary industries, community infrastructure, unmet educational need, and opportunity for adult student enrollments in your community. Please include data where available.

> 300 word limit

Community Needs

Tell us about what is exceptional about your college. What unique need do you fill in your community? How do you know that? Please include quantitative or qualitative data where available.

> 300 word limit

Student Needs

Tell us about the students who attend your college. What are their social and educational needs? How do you address those needs? Please include quantitative or qualitative data where available.

> 300 word limit

Adult Students

What does your college promise adult students? What will they gain by attending your college?

> 300 word limit

Adult Students Proof

What "proof" do you have that you can deliver on that promise? Please include quantitative or qualitative data where available.

> 300 word limit

Adult Students Summary

If you had to summarize the main message about your college that you want to convey to prospective adult students, what would it be?

300 word limit

Vision

How would your college strategically use $1 million to transform your brand-building efforts and why?

a. Marketing
b. Staffing
c. Campus events
d. Workforce and community partnerships
e. Enrollment management
f. Other

No word limit

Supporting Documents

Letter from the President
Your application submission must include a statement of support from your college's president. The statement should demonstrate how the focus on brand-building and marketing aligns with your institution's commitment to adult students and describe how the president will support and provide resources for this work beyond the grant period.

Institution W-9
Please include a copy of your college's W-9.

Submission Guidelines and Support

Applicants should complete all application components and submit their completed applications at **www.luminafoundation.org/challenge**.

Applications are considered complete when the following documents are submitted:

- ✓ Narrative: All questions must be addressed for the application to be considered complete.

- ✓ Support Documents: One letter of support for this work from the president, and a copy of the institution's W-9 must be submitted with the application narrative to be considered complete. Documents must be uploaded as PDFs.

You will receive email confirmation when your application has been submitted. Incomplete applications will not be accepted.

Submission Support
All questions concerning this grant or the application process should be directed to **challenge@luminafoundation.org**.