

BUNDLED AND SEQUENCED SUPPORTS

REACH Collaborative Brief Two





WHAT IS THE REACH COLLABORATIVE?

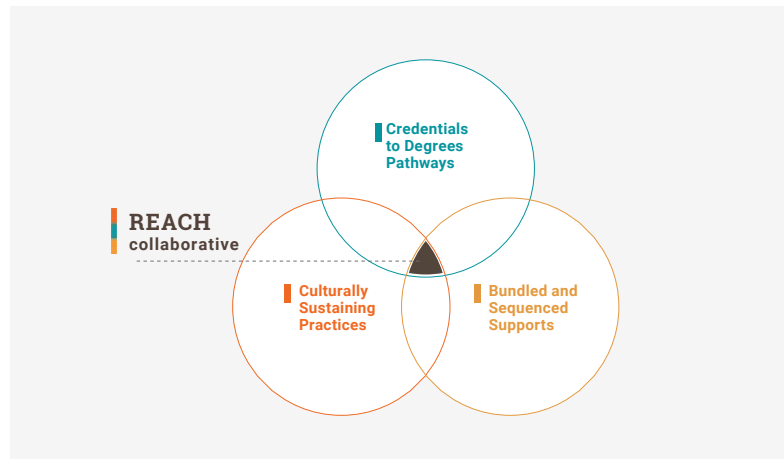
The REACH Collaborative is focused on creating clear paths for more Black, Hispanic, and Native American adults to grow their skills and advance their careers.

Nearly 140 community colleges in states including California, Colorado, New York, North Carolina, and Virginia are developing academic pathways of credentials in sequences that align with associate degree programs, making it possible for adult students of color to pursue better job opportunities in the short term and work toward higher aspirations in the future.

Supported by Lumina Foundation, the REACH Collaborative is set the goal of a 2% increase in credential attainment for enrolled Black, Hispanic, and Native American adults, ages 25-64, at participating community colleges by 2023.

REACH’s three main components—Credentials to Degrees Pathways, Bundled and Sequenced Supports, and Culturally Sustaining Practices—are intentionally designed to work together to support adult students of color, addressing their specific needs and experiences.

This brief focuses on **Bundled and Sequenced Supports** and the factors that should be considered when prioritizing adult learners of color.



It will look at:

- **Identifying Supports**
- **Aligning Supports with Pathways**
- **Ensuring Accessibility**
- **Engaging the Right Partners**

REACH Key Terms and Definitions

These definitions were collected from multiple postsecondary education, workforce, and government sources.

Basic Needs: Includes access to nutritious and sufficient food; safe, secure, and adequate housing; healthcare to promote sustained mental and physical well-being; affordable technology and transportation; resources for personal hygiene; and childcare and related needs.

Basic Needs Insecurity: A structural characteristic affecting students, not an individual characteristic. It means that there is not an ecosystem in place to ensure that students’ basic needs are met.

Academic Support: A wide variety of instructional methods, educational services, or school resources provided to students in the effort to help them accelerate their learning progress, catch up with their peers, meet learning standards, or generally succeed in school.

Non-academic Support: Activities and programs that are designed to encourage academic success but that do not deal directly with academic content.

Holistic Advising: Individualized and tailored approach to advising that views all aspects of students’ lives as interconnected.

Comprehensive Financial Aid: Traditional financial aid combined with public, means-tested benefits, such as food stamps and child care assistance, and refundable tax credits.

Emergency Financial Aid: Aid that is provided for students in one-time emergency situations to help support them quickly and in a way in which they do not incur more debt.

Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP): A program of the U.S. Department of Agriculture that provides nutrition benefits to supplement the food budget of needy families so they can purchase healthy food and move towards self-sufficiency.

Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF): A program of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services that provides grant funds to states and territories to provide families with financial assistance and related support services (childcare assistance, job preparation, work assistance, etc.).

REACH COLLABORATIVE PARTNERS:





BUNDLED AND SEQUENCED SUPPORTS

A UNIQUE SET OF CIRCUMSTANCES

For adults of color, the challenges involved in pursuing a higher level of education and, subsequently, better job opportunities almost always extend beyond their ability to be successful in the classroom. The realities and responsibilities of their lives make the prospect of enrolling in a credential or degree program – and dedicating valuable time and money to completing it – a risky one. And yet, that is exactly what many adults of color have said they plan to do, due in no small part to the pandemic and its economic effects. More than 20 million adults indicated they intend to enroll in community colleges by 2023, with Black and Hispanic adults accounting for more than half of that number (Strada, 2021).

For colleges to serve adult students of color well, it is vital to understand the many complexities of their lives and be prepared to address them in ways that are proactive and effective.

Financial struggles are one of the key reasons adults of color turn to higher education, hoping to improve economic mobility for themselves and quality of life for their families, which often include children and other dependents. Unfortunately, it is also a major barrier to them ultimately reaching their goals.

Nearly a third of adults who said they plan to enroll in community colleges earn less than \$24,000 annually, and more than half of them work full-time and have children (Strada, 2021). Basic needs insecurity (BNI) is higher among students of color, with Black, Native American, and Alaska Native students experiencing BNI rates 16 percentage points higher than White students. Parenting students of color also experience much higher rates of basic needs insecurity than non-parenting or White parenting students (McKibben & Qarni, 2022). Factor in that community colleges enroll the largest share of student parents, 42 percent, and that student parents are more likely than students without children to be students of color, and it's easy to see why a focus on offering the right supports for

this specific student population is so important for community colleges (Cruse et al., 2019).

Access to non-academic supports like food, transportation, housing, child care, and physical and mental health care is critical to ensuring that adult students of color can focus on their classes and succeed in whatever academic and career paths they choose. Academic supports, ones that acknowledge adult students' hectic schedules, have also been shown to lead to better outcomes.

As community colleges in the REACH Collaborative work to create and implement Credentials to Degrees Pathways designed for Black, Hispanic, and Native American adults, they are also intentionally developing wraparound services to support students at every step.

Identifying Supports Needs

Integrating existing supports into pathways, without first thinking comprehensively about needs that adults of color may have, increases the likelihood that some of those needs won't be met. For this reason, it is important to start the process by creating a complete list of potential supports, academic and non-academic.

Once this list exists, a college can then begin to dive deeper and assess its ability to either directly provide or connect adult students of color with specific supports. The following is not an exhaustive list but includes foundational supports that can be expanded upon, tailored to account for regional context, and routinely updated to meet changing student needs.



Academic Supports

- Holistic advising
- Textbooks and other course materials
- Tutoring/Volunteer mentoring
- Learning labs/Study group opportunities
- Digital learning tools
- Study skills programs
- Flexible office hours

Non-academic Supports

- Food and other essential supplies (Medication, baby formula, etc.)
- Safe, affordable housing
- Accessible, affordable transportation
- Quality, safe, accessible, and affordable childcare
- Technology and broadband internet access
- Comprehensive financial aid
- Emergency expense funding
- Public benefits or assistance
- Culturally competent mental health services
- Medical care and treatment
- Career coaching

Academic Supports

Regardless of their end goals, there's a common skill all adult learners share—impeccable time management. The constant juggling of studying, working, and caregiving can result in a dizzying mental load for these students. Effective academic supports should attempt to lighten this load as much as possible, ensuring students have everything they need to be successful in their Credentials to Degrees Pathways, including access to additional help, if needed, and ample opportunities to engage with understanding faculty and advisors.

Guiding Questions for Assessing Academic Supports Needs

- What **kinds of materials** will adult students of color need in pathways? Beyond textbooks, are there other required supplies, such as uniforms and personal protective equipment (PPE)? If Career Technical Education (CTE) tools or machinery are necessary, do they need to be transported or can they be stored on campus?
- Can **fees for materials be included** in financial aid? Are there organizations that would provide or pay for course materials?
- Are there **Open Educational Resources (OER)** associated with courses in the pathway that are publicly available and could lower or eliminate out-of-pocket costs for students?
- Will they need **access to technology and broadband internet** to complete coursework or take exams?
- What kinds of **professional development opportunities** have been offered to faculty and academic advisors to help them support adult students of color?
- Are **morning and afternoon registration events** and office hours offered to accommodate for work schedules, parenting duties, etc? Do students have an option to meet and communicate with faculty and advisors either in person or online?
- Are there **options to supplement their learning** through digital tools, study groups, or tutoring?
- Are there **internship opportunities** associated with the selected pathways? Are those internships paid or unpaid? Are they conducive to caregiving and work schedules?

BUNDLED AND SEQUENCED

The terms bundled and sequenced are not related to the types of supports, but rather how they are delivered. Bundling refers to effective grouping and offering of supports, while sequencing means they are employed proactively and with intention at specific times (Strategies for Improving Postsecondary Credential Attainment Among Black, Hispanic, and Native American Adults, 2021). By combining these approaches, students are more likely to have the supports they need when they need them, removing barriers that could threaten their success.



Non-academic Supports

At any given time, the delicate balancing act of life responsibilities that adult learners manage, in and out of the classroom, can collapse. If any piece of the puzzle falls out of place, the probability that these students will be able to continue to progress in their pathways significantly decreases. Having appropriate supports in place that adult students of color can take advantage of to fill an ongoing need or solve a problem when it arises will help them stay the course.

Guiding Questions for Assessing Non-academic Supports Needs

- How does **your institution currently learn** about whether students' basic needs are met?
- Has your institution **explored state- or county-level data** on basic needs insecurity? Was that data disaggregated by age, race, ethnicity, and parental status?
- Are there **organizations already collecting data** about basic needs supports and services in your region?
- Are there **existing partnerships with community organizations** to help collect data and provide resources?
- Is there a **food pantry** on your campus? Is there a childcare center on or near campus? Is the childcare affordable and available part-time?
- Is your **campus easily reachable using public transportation**? Are there available subsidies for transportation?
- Does your college offer **comprehensive financial aid**? Are textbook fees and other expenses covered?
- What are the **criteria and prioritization for awarding emergency grants or loans**? What is the process for applying for these funds?
- Are **students on your campus currently utilizing public benefits**? If so, which ones? If not, can you identify specific reasons or barriers to access? Can you disaggregate by race, ethnicity, age, and parental status to see who is not taking advantage of these benefits?
- What kind of **mental and physical healthcare services** are available on campus? Are they accessible for working adult students? Are there online or telehealth services available? Are these services culturally competent to meet the cultural needs of the student population?

NO EXCEPTIONS

If your Credentials to Degrees Pathways for adult students of color will include non-credit credential programs, it is important to understand your institution's policies on access to non-academic supports. Regardless of whether they are taking non-credit or credit-bearing courses, all students enrolled at a college should be able to benefit from the services offered there.

ALIGNING SUPPORTS WITH PATHWAYS

Once supports needs, current services, and offerings gaps have been identified and addressed, the process of lining up supports with pathways can begin. The goal is for adult students of color to have the right supports at exactly the right time, and this begins from the moment of enrollment to completion of credential programs and, ultimately, earning a degree. Before they even step foot on campus or log on for their first virtual class, students should be aware of what services are available to them.

In designing Credentials to Degrees Pathways, REACH Collaborative colleges are stacking credentials that align with associate degree programs. By creating visual maps of how adult students of color will move through these pathways, they can pinpoint how and when supports need to be integrated. They can also identify which supports need to be proactively offered, as well as how often and at what points that outreach should occur. Colleges that have implemented or are implementing Guided Pathways will have existing academic maps that can be used for this purpose.

Ensuring Accessibility

The moment things fall apart—the car breaks down, daycare closes, rent increases—is not the time for adult students to start exploring how their college can help them through a crisis and where to go for that help. Assistance needs to be well communicated and easily accessible.



One Location, One Point of Contact

A central hub for supports, on campus and on the institution's website, and a specific role focused on connecting students with the right support prevents students from spending precious time searching for help and potentially becoming discouraged. While different administrative offices may oversee different supports, having one student-facing location can eliminate silos that create additional barriers for students. Additionally, dedicated Navigators, people in these locations who aid students with next steps and make sure their issues are addressed, can improve the overall experience. Students can commit a name and face to memory and build trust with their Navigator.

Many community colleges and college systems have adopted programs like Single Stop to create "one-stop shops" where students and their families can connect with public benefits and "wraparound services, such as tax preparation, child care, and immigration consultation." Any enrolled student can visit the Single Stop office on campus and talk to a site coordinator or seek support online.

In the Loop

Even with a central hub, it is still beneficial for all college staff to have some systems knowledge related to supports—namely, what are they, what is needed to access them, and any potential barriers. A faculty member could be the first person an adult student of color asks about the on-campus food bank. While directing the student to the food bank's website is good, providing information about open hours or answering questions about whether allergy-friendly food options are offered increases the student's chance for success.

ENGAGING THE RIGHT PARTNERS

In addition to utilizing their internal capacity, colleges in the REACH Collaborative are engaging external partners to leverage programmatic offerings and resources that will reinforce comprehensive, holistic supports for adult students of color.

Service Providers

Institutions that do not have their own food banks should establish a relationship with a local bank to support food insecure students. Childcare and public transportation providers may be willing to offer discounted fees for students, subsidized by the college or student government groups on campus. In rural communities where mass transit is not an option, an agreement with a ride service like Uber or Lyft could represent an alternative.

Community Organizations & Nonprofits

Community-based organizations, like local churches and branches of the United Way, could represent key partners. Their aligned focus on creating greater economic and social mobility and their connections to the community are beneficial in both supporting and promoting the pathways. National nonprofits, such as Swipe Out Hunger, can also help provide gap-filling solutions. Mental health organizations located in the same city or region could be important partners for campuses that have limited or non-existent mental health services.

Government Agencies & Programs

Partnerships with government programs and agencies, like Veterans Affairs, increase the likelihood that students will take advantage of the benefits that are available to them. Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) and the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) provide important public assistance for students and their families who qualify. Students may also receive Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits if they meet eligibility requirements. Some Head Start programs have dedicated partnerships with colleges, offering high-quality childcare and other resources to income-eligible families.



SET UP FOR SUCCESS

The specific needs of adults of color in your institution’s region, as well as other contextual factors, should determine how you offer supports. The following prompts can help to supplement other guiding questions in this brief in creating an action plan.

- ➔ How clear, accessible, and consistent are your communications about available supports? How is the effectiveness of these communications being measured?
- ➔ Has your institution done process mapping of current services? Were you able to show each step of how students, particularly adult students, access these services? Did you identify any issues in that process? If so, have those issues been addressed?
- ➔ What does your institutional data tell you about which students are currently utilizing available supports? Are there differences based on age, race, ethnicity, or enrollment in credit/non-credit programs?
- ➔ Has student feedback on supports been solicited? Have any focus groups on supports offerings been conducted?
- ➔ What does your institution’s data reveal about the preceding non-academic factors (food insecurity, etc) leading to program withdrawal?
- ➔ Is there quantitative or qualitative data that indicates access to supports is supporting retention and completion? How is that information being collected and shared? How can it be used to improve or enhance those services?
- ➔ What community relationships or partnerships does your institution currently have in place that could be leveraged to provide or supplement supports offerings?
- ➔ Does your college work with your state’s SNAP Employment and Training (SNAP E&T) program to provide a Basic Food Employment and Training (BFET) program?
- ➔ How, if at all, are supports being bundled? Is it through the lens of how a student experiences them? (For example, how do the bus routes and schedule align with the child care center location and pick-up times?)
- ➔ Overall, how family-friendly is your campus? Where are there areas for improvement?

STATE HIGHLIGHTS



California

Promising Practices & Basic Needs Initiative

Serving roughly 1.8 million students across the state, the majority (60%) of California Community College (CCC) students have experienced some form of basic needs insecurity, with students of color experiencing at disproportionately higher rates (Goldrick-Rab, Baker-Smith, Coca, & Looker, 2019). California’s 116 community colleges can leverage a number of promising practices on campuses in their REACH Collaborative work. One of these efforts is the U-Pass discounted transit program, offered at 15 colleges in partnership with the Los Angeles County

This significant investment recognizes how critical basic needs support is to students’ success, especially for adult learners and students of color. We will continue to scale shining examples where colleges are removing barriers for students through the framework of the Basic Needs Initiative.

Sandra Fried,
Vice President, Success Center for California Community Colleges.

Metropolitan Transportation Agency (LA Metro), to address transportation barriers for students. At Rio Hondo College, where the student population

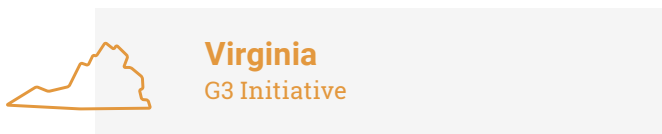


is predominantly Latinx and receives financial aid, U-Pass is part of the college’s larger transit program, GO RIO, available to all enrolled students.

Four LA-area community colleges are part of the College Success Initiative with Jovenes, an organization focused on addressing homelessness. Since launching the initiative in 2016, Jovenes has housed 100 students in dormitory-style bridge housing, and 68% have either graduated, transferred, or are still currently enrolled. Another community partnership between the United Way Bay Area and several community colleges in the region, SparkPoint, offers a number of supports for low-income students, from public benefits screening and job search assistance to debt counseling and financial coaching. A comparative analysis revealed that SparkPoint participants who received a specific

bundle of services that included employment and budgeting/savings supports reduced their distance to self-sufficiency by an average of \$100-\$700 (Hwang, J., & Sankaran, K., 2014).

In addition to these ongoing regional efforts, the Basic Needs Initiative will create a system-wide approach to offering bundled supports. The state has committed funds for colleges to establish basic needs centers on all 115 brick-and-mortar CCC campuses, as well as hiring designated coordinators to help students access basic needs resources, public benefits, and financial aid in a centralized hub. Each college will create a webpage to inform students about their basic needs centers and proactively reach out to students who have received supports in the past.



When it comes to incorporating wraparound supports into stackable credential pathways, Virginia can draw from its experience with the statewide Get Skilled, Get a Job, Give Back (G3) initiative. G3 is a tuition assistance program available to any Virginia resident who qualifies for in-state financial aid and whose annual family income falls below \$100,000. The assistance can be used for designated programs in five of the state’s most in-demand industries: Early Childhood Education, Healthcare, Information Technology, Public Safety, and Skilled Trades. Each of Virginia’s 23 community colleges has a list of approved G3 programs; offerings will vary from college to college to match the local business needs.

As a “last dollar program,” G3 makes up the difference of what is not covered by financial aid. In addition to paying for tuition, fees, and books, G3 supports full-time credit students at the lowest income levels with funding for expenses such as food, transportation, and child care. With these basic needs fulfilled, students can focus on moving through their academic pathways, which are structured to put the skills-

G3 has been a game-changer for Virginia in many ways. As a ‘last dollar grant program,’ G3 serves adult students eligible for in-state tuition who may have access to some resources but not enough to fully pay for their coursework. Absent the financial assistance and wraparound services enabled through the program, these scholars might have to work a significant number of hours and carry extra responsibilities that make degree, certificate, and credential completion tough—or impossible—to accomplish. Through the significant investment provided by G3, students pursuing a career in one of five high-demand fields are supported all the way through graduation to gain the skills and knowledge they need for a stable, well-paying career.

Angela Lawhorne
Director, Career Education Programs & Workforce Partnerships,
Virginia Community College System



based credit courses first. This means students can earn short-term credentials and find employment, while continuing to complete their general education courses and progress toward an associate degree.

Data suggests that students who complete their pathways can anticipate earning between 25 percent and 50 percent more in wages. Within the first year of the G3 initiative, enrollment in eligible academic programs increased, and more than \$17 million in aid was awarded. Not only will G3 help the state find more skilled workers for its 300,000 unfilled jobs, it will also be leveraged in efforts like the REACH Collaborative to ensure adults of color in Virginia have the support needed to move into and advance their careers in growing sectors.

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