


Help More Students Complete College

Nationally, over 43 million adults have some college but no credential, a population that continues to grow across the country. Efforts to re-enroll these students have resulted in fewer students stopping out, but disparities in key outcomes persist across returning student populations. Completing a quality degree is key to unlocking the benefits of higher education, including securing meaningful employment that pays a family-sustaining wage and allows borrowers to repay student loans. When enrollment in postsecondary education does not translate into completion, it limits individuals' earning potential and reduces the return on federal investment in higher education.



More than
43 million
adults in the US have some college but no credential.

Strengthen Federal Investments to Improve College Completion and Workforce Outcomes

Federal investments in college completion are essential to ensure that postsecondary education delivers meaningful economic returns for students and taxpayers. Despite expanded access to higher education, many students—particularly those who are low income, first generation, rural, adult learners, or from underrepresented backgrounds—do not have adequate access to the holistic supports they need to reach their educational and professional goals. Evidence shows that sustained, targeted, and comprehensive approaches to student success improve enrollment and completion outcomes. Long-standing federal college access and completion programs such as TRIO and GEAR UP are associated with higher rates of persistence and completion, particularly for students facing systemic barriers, and are most effective when funding is stable and programs can be delivered continuously over multiple years.

Ensure Stable Funding and Policy Support for Effective College Completion Strategies

Funding instability, grant disruptions, and short-term approaches undermine gains in improving college completion rates. The growing federal emphasis on career pathways and workforce readiness underscores the importance of aligning college completion efforts with high-quality, credit-bearing credentials that lead to continued education and economic mobility. **Strengthening federal completion policy is critical to help students finish the educational journey they start, build institutional capacity to implement and scale effective completion strategies, and ensure federal dollars are targeted toward postsecondary pathways that lead to strong workforce and economic returns.**



The following priorities may be advanced through appropriations, reauthorization, or other legislative vehicles aligned with improving college completion outcomes.



Congressional Action

- ➔ **Fund federal grant programs that measurably improve postsecondary outcomes** (including persistence, upward transfer, and completion of credentials of value) by prioritizing evidence-based strategies, data use, and rigorous evaluation to ensure federal investments lead to meaningful student success.
- ➔ **Strengthen college access and completion programs**, especially TRIO and GEAR UP, by providing stable funding and continuity of services that provide first-generation and low-income students with sustained academic advising, tutoring, and navigation supports shown to improve persistence and completion outcomes.
- ➔ **Support institutional capacity to improve completion** by aligning federal investments with efforts that help colleges implement, evaluate, and sustain evidence-based student success strategies that lead to measurable improvements in student outcomes.
- ➔ **Establish a national innovation fund to improve college completion and workforce outcomes** by providing eligible entities with resources to increase their capacity to adopt innovative solutions that will increase educational attainment and improve degree completion outcomes for all college students.

