

Beyond Financial Aid: How Colleges & Universities Can Support Students with Financial Instability

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Going Beyond Financial Aid: A Transformative Agenda for Low Income Student Success

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Agenda:

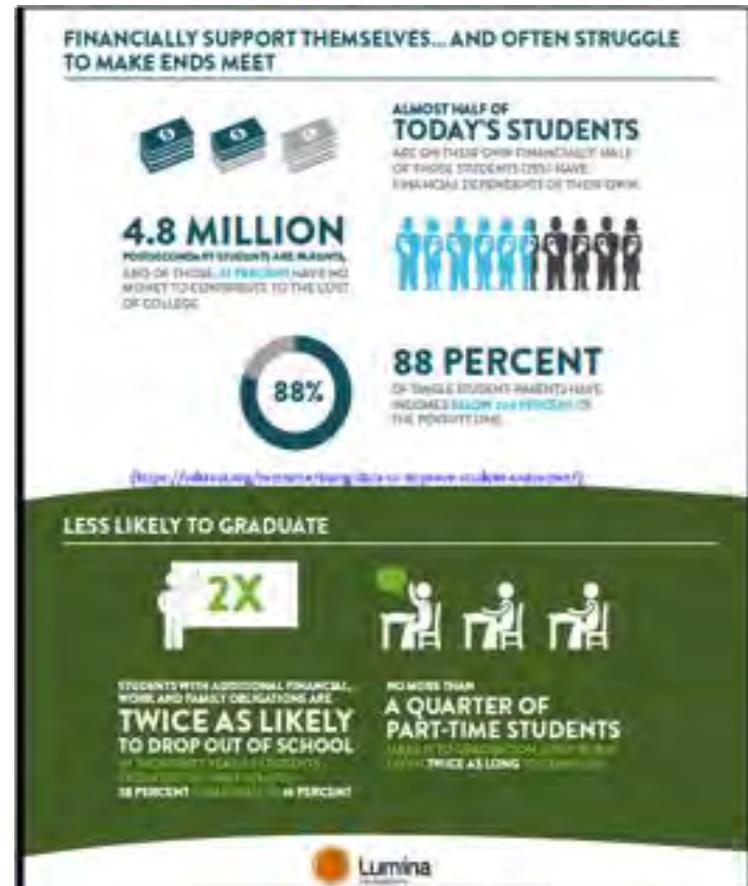
- **Welcome and Overview**
- **Framing the Conversation**
- **Overview of “Beyond Financial Aid”
(*BFA*)**
 - A framework of institutional strategies
 - A self-assessment for institutions

Goal 2025:

To increase the proportion of Americans with **high-quality**¹ **degrees, certificates, and other credentials** to **60%** by the year 2025.

1 High-quality credentials have clear and transparent learning outcomes leading to further education and employment.

Framing the Conversation – Today's Students:



Framing the Conversation – The Paradigm Shift:

Serving and supporting today's requires fundamental changes:

- ✓ Expanding what we understand as important for student success
- ✓ Organizing and taking action for their success

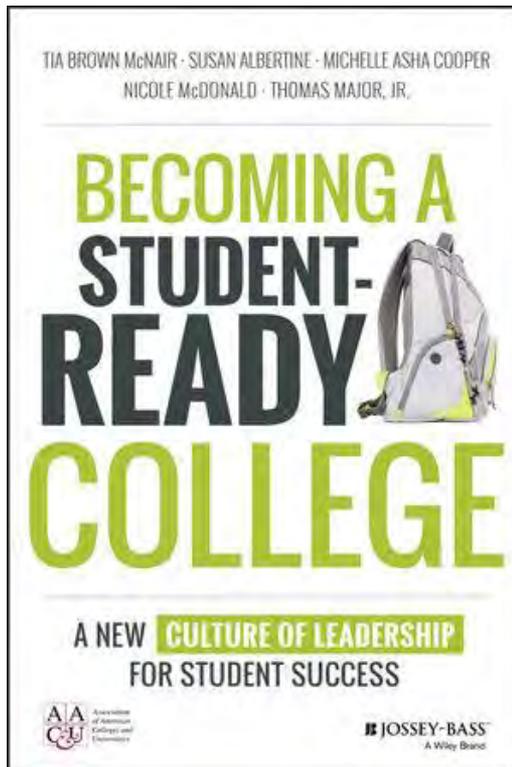
Framing the Conversation – The Paradigm Shift:

**Is your college or university
student-ready?**

Framing the Conversation – The Challenge:

- Some colleges simply don't have the structures in place
- At others there may be no expectation to be student-centric
- And, there are institutions that may be constrained by external forces—or that are just so overwhelmed and under-resourced

Framing the Conversation – What does it mean to be student-ready?



- Strategically, comprehensively advance student success.
- Intentionally facilitate students' progressive advancement toward college completion and positive post-college outcomes.
- Committed to student achievement as well as organizational learning and improvement.
- Establish shared principles and values, and an approach to leadership that empowers all members of the campus community to be leaders and educators.
- Acknowledge that they are part of an ecosystem, a part of a network of other organizations within the community.

Overview of Beyond Financial Aid – BFA is...

- ✓ A resource based on research and promising practices from initiatives in which institutions have demonstrated the ability to effectively serve and graduate low income students
- ✓ Designed to help guide action to increase low income student success. BFA addresses the following questions:
 - Why is low income student completion a high-priority within the larger student attainment movement?
 - What strategies can drive institutional change to better facilitate low income students' success?
 - How can institutions take a strengths-based approach to assessing readiness and capacity to support low income students?
 - What action steps can institutions take to strengthen their ability to help more low income students complete and earn credentials?

Overview of Beyond Financial Aid – A Resource to Help Colleges to Increase the Success of Low-Income Students



- **Section 1: Making the Case for Improved Supports for Low-Income Students**
- **Section 2: Five Strategies to Support Low-Income Students**
- **Section 3: BFA Self-assessment Guide**
 - Assessing Your Institution's Support for Low-Income Students
 - Interpreting Your Self-Assessment Results and Strengthening Supports for Low-Income Students
- **Section 4: Implementation Guide**
 - Conducting the self-assessment
 - Action Planning

Overview of Beyond Financial Aid: Guiding Principles

- A large and growing number of postsecondary students face the challenges created by limited resources. In fact, approximately **one in three American undergraduates receives a Pell grant** and is therefore considered a low-income student.
- When institutions structure and offer **all types** of financial aid (including “**nontraditional**” supports) in a **coherent, consumable way**, students will **persist longer, generate additional revenue** for the institution, and **graduate** at higher rates.
- Providing these supports in an intentional way is **not an impossible dream**; rather, **institutions** across the country **are doing it and doing it well**.

5 Strategies for Building an Agenda for Low Income Student Success

- Strategy 1: Know Your Low Income Students
- Strategy 2: Review and Organize Student Supports
- Strategy 3: Build Internal and External Partnerships
- Strategy 4: Optimize Student Use of Services
- Strategy 5: Create a Culture of Student Support

Exploring the 5 Strategies – Overview:

Strategy 1: Know your low-income students. Each institution varies in the specific makeup of its low-income students and in the supports it offers those students. Reviewing quantitative and qualitative institutional data can help determine accurate populations and characteristics of low-income students, how they experience the institution, and which factors affect their ability to succeed.

Strategy 2: Review internal processes and organize supports. Institutional policies and practices are created to achieve specific outcomes and to address specific conditions. As time passes, what was designed as a resource may have unintended negative impacts on low-income students, or no value at all. Reviewing internal processes from the perspective of low-income students, and with their feedback, can help identify opportunities to revise programs and processes to create better outcomes and to target the needs of low-income students.

Exploring the 5 Strategies – Overview:

Strategy 3: Build internal and external partnerships. Institutions can leverage and expand their capacity to meet the needs of low-income students by building partnerships to include internal groups—faculty, administrators, staff, students, and alumni; and external organizations with shared missions, commitments, and students. Strengthening these partnerships can benefit all stakeholders.

Strategy 4: Optimize students use of services. While some students proactively seek out services and resources, many others do not. Improving the accessibility of financial supports by reducing hassle factors, simplifying students' choice-making, and providing clear messages and reminders to students about financial support services can increase their use and impact.

Exploring the 5 Strategies – Overview:

Strategy 5: Create a culture of support. Many institutions are exploring practices known to encourage the progression and achievement of all students. However, without integrated supports that stabilize their finances and academic experiences, low-income students are at high risk of not completing a postsecondary credential.

STRATEGY 1

Know your low-income students

Strategy 1: Know Your Low Income Students

- Each institution varies in its makeup of low-income students as well as their unmet needs and existing supports
- Use institutional data to learn more:
 - How many of your students have low income?
 - What are their levels of unmet need?
 - What are the rates at which they progress and succeed?
 - What is their experience at the institution?
- **Example**: Georgia State University's Panther Retention Grants, LaGuardia's use of FAFSA

STRATEGY 2

Review Internal Processes and Organize Student Supports

Strategy 2: Review Your Internal Processes and Organize Student Supports

- What was once a convenient policy or a reasonable process may now have unintended impacts, especially on low-income students
- Review, update, reorganize, and streamline internal processes that can ease the ability and speed of students to access services, enroll in courses, and complete educational goals
- Flowchart the experience of low-income students
- **Example**: Skyline College's Comprehensive Diversity Framework (California)

STRATEGY 3

Build internal and external partnerships

Strategy 3: Build Internal and External Partnerships

- Strengthen community partnerships with organizations that have shared missions, values, and students
 - Workforce and government benefits agencies
 - Community- and faith-based organizations
 - Organizations offering legal support, tax coaching and preparation
 - Corporate partners interested in regional community development
- Consider ways to bring services directly to the students
- **Examples**: CNM Connect with VITA, Georgia State University and banks, Skyline’s “CalFresh in a Day”

STRATEGY 4

Optimize Students' Use of Services

Strategy 4: Optimize Students' Use of Services

- Many students do not proactively seek out these services
- Shift the default from an “opt-in” model to an “opt-out” model
 - Mandatory financial literacy classes
- Normalize the act of accessing financial supports
- **Example**: LaGuardia’s Integrated Public Benefits Screening Process

Self-Assessment Instrument: Sample Items for Strategy 4

- Students at my institution participate in a benefits screening process—not just those students who arrive at the institution knowing they need financial assistance.
- Students at my institution understand the full costs of attending the institution and the different ways to pay for it, including the differences between loans, grants and scholarships.

STRATEGY 5

Create a Culture of Support

Strategy 5: Create a culture of Support

- Practices include:
 - Helping incoming students identify educational and career interests and develop educational plans
 - Offering structured pathways, programs of study, and courses that lead to success
 - Implementing mechanisms to monitor student progress
 - Educating students of the costs of programs
 - Supporting graduates in transitioning to employment
- While these practices support all students, they can make larger differences for low-income students

Beyond Financial Aid Self-Assessment:

- Self-Assessment
 - Enables your Core Team to catalog effective existing practices across your college and discover additional activities worth considering
 - Not designed to highlight deficiencies, but to reveal opportunities
- Interpretation Guide
 - The Guide provides suggestions for next steps as well as areas for further discussion that are based on your Core Team's responses

Discussion/Q&A:

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Appendix:

Sample Assessment Questions

Self-Assessment Instrument: Sample Items for Strategy 1

- My institution has identified the number of low-income students.
- My institution tracks unmet need levels for each individual student.
- My institution analyzes and uses the information on the FAFSA concerning supplemental nutrition and other income/benefit supports.

Self-Assessment Instrument: Sample Items for Strategy 2

- My institution provides information and education to faculty and student services professionals to ensure that all campus stakeholders understand the circumstances and challenges faced by low-income students.
- My institution ensures that courses and academic programs are scheduled to be available to low-income students who work at different hours of the day or night (e.g., morning / afternoon / evening).
- My institution has a well-publicized emergency assistance program for low-income students who encounter episodic but disruptive life events that hinder their ability to attend school.

Self-Assessment Instrument: Sample Items for Strategy 3

- My institution partners with organizations that provide (or could provide) free legal services to low-income students.
- My institution partners with organizations that provide (or could provide) workforce and state benefits to low-income students.
- My institution partners with organizations to provide tax coaching and preparation to low-income students.

Self-Assessment Instrument: Sample Items for Strategy 5

- My institution works with all incoming students to match their interests and existing skills to potential careers.
- My institution helps students monitor their own progress towards their educational goals.
- My institution tracks the wages of students after they complete their programs.

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