

# 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:

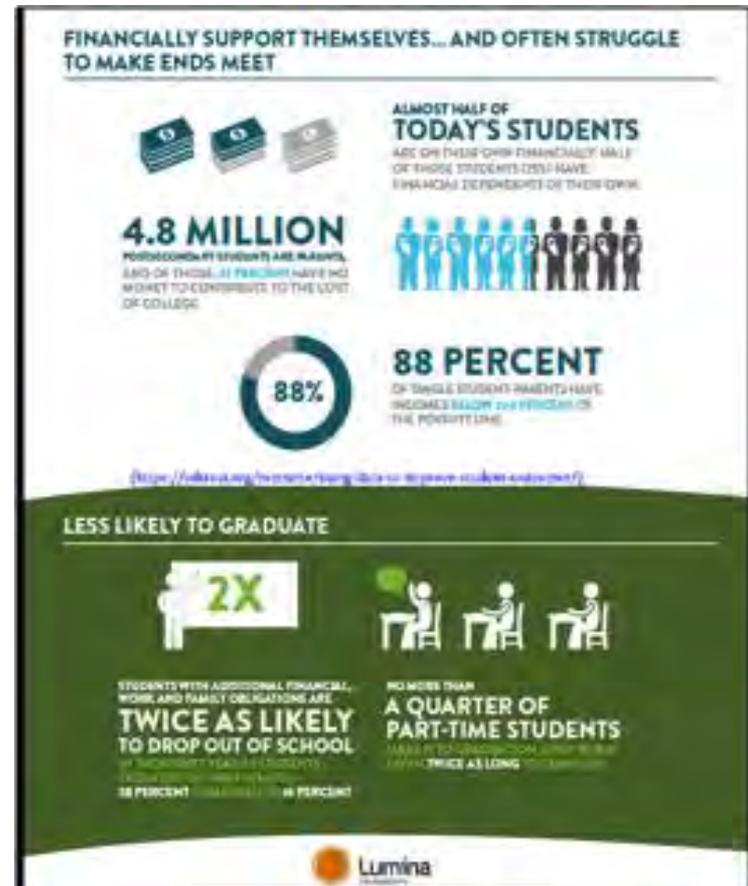
- **Welcome and Overview**
- **Framing the Conversation**
- **Overview of “Beyond Financial Aid”  
(*BFA*)**
  - A framework of institutional strategies
  - A self-assessment for institutions

## Goal 2025:

To increase the proportion of Americans with **high-quality**<sup>1</sup> **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

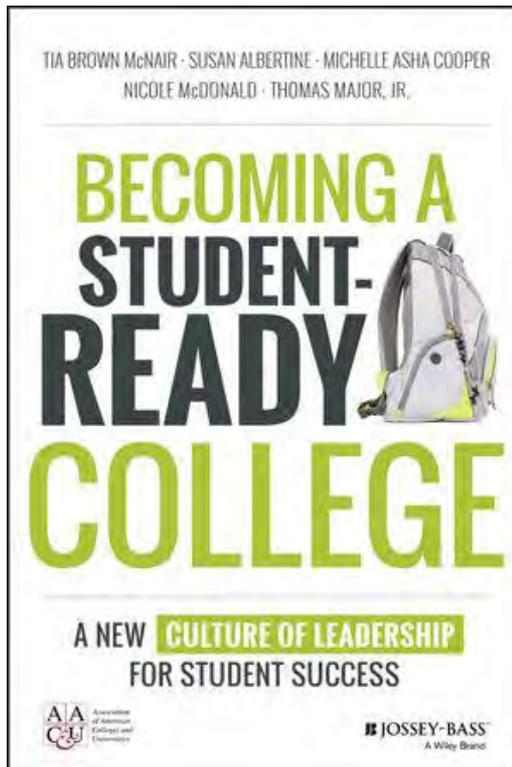
# **Framing the Conversation – The Paradigm Shift:**

**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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