



America Forward on Higher Education

Innovation, Flexibility, and Data-Driven Results

America Forward is the nonpartisan policy initiative of New Profit, a national nonprofit venture philanthropy fund that seeks to break down barriers between all people and opportunity in America. To date, New Profit has invested over \$150 million in scaling innovative organizations' impact. America Forward unites social entrepreneurs with policymakers and advances a public policy agenda that fosters innovation, rewards results, catalyzes cross-sector partnerships, and translates local impact into national change.

The America Forward Coalition is a network of more than 70 social innovation organizations that champion innovative, effective, and efficient solutions to our country's most pressing social problems. Our Coalition members are achieving measurable outcomes in more than 14,500 communities nationwide, touching the lives of 8 million Americans each year, and driving progress in education, workforce development, early learning, poverty alleviation, public health, Pay for Success, social innovation, national service, and criminal justice reform. Since 2007, America Forward's community of entrepreneurs has played a leading role in driving the national dialogue on social innovation and advocating for lasting policy change. Together, our Coalition organizations have leveraged \$1.5 billion for social innovation and have driven millions of federal resources along with resources leveraged from donors and philanthropy toward programs that are achieving measurable results for those who need them most.

We believe that innovative policy approaches that foster innovation, reward results, and catalyze cross-sector partnerships can transform these local results into national change and propel all of America forward.

Who We Are

Every day we are doing the hard work of moving America forward. Some of us help students from under-resourced communities or with learning disabilities prosper in early childhood, elementary and high school, enabling them to graduate ready for college and career. Some of us help families through crisis periods and enable youth leaving the foster care system to live independently. Others offer "opportunity youth" the chance to gain the education and training they need to find their path to college and the workforce. Some of us help students persist in post-secondary programs by providing the extra supports they need. Others offer "bridge building jobs" that provide work experience accompanied by supports that help workers transition to future opportunities. And many of us provide critical supports, inspire and motivate those we serve, improve access to other providers, and help people navigate the often confusing education, job training, and workforce systems.

We hold ourselves to high standards. We measure our results. And our success tells us that it is possible to forge a pathway from poverty to economic success. But it will take hard work, investment, and significant reforms.

Why We Care

Far too many students from under-resourced populations, including students from low-income backgrounds or those living with a disability, continue to face significant barriers to accessing and succeeding in post-secondary education programs, whether at a community college, vocational or technical training program, or four-year college or university. Empowering students to succeed in post-secondary education and beyond will require reimagining our higher education system by more fully aligning it with workforce development and national service to create clear pathways into the workforce; providing relevant and individualized information, continuous support – beginning in the K-12 system and through completion/graduation – to help students and families navigate post-secondary education and the successful transition to the workforce; as well as embracing new strategies that provide stronger linkages between post-secondary education and career, and which reduce the unsustainable financial burden too often shouldered by students.

Existing barriers to post-secondary education – including financial concerns; lack of comprehensive information, counseling, support and accommodations; inadequate preparation; and, misaligned requirements – often represent insurmountable obstacles for students. In a job market increasingly predicated on the attainment of an Associate’s or Bachelor’s degree, barriers that prevent enrollment or persistence in post-secondary education effectively bar the door to the middle class and further exacerbate the cycle of poverty. Without better information, effective supports that help ensure student persistence, new financial aid policies that reduce or even eliminate student debt, and credentials that are aligned with workforce needs, millions of Americans will continue to be trapped in a system that limits economic mobility and perpetuates existing social inequities.

The negative consequences of continuing to undercut such tremendous human capital are irrefutable. Even at a time when an estimated three million U.S. jobs sit vacantⁱ and many employers say that a shortage of qualified workers is their biggest obstacle to growth,ⁱⁱ there are more than six million young people, ages 16 to 24, who are not in school or not working. If left unaddressed, this group, known collectively as “opportunity youth,” will cost taxpayers \$93 billion annually and \$1.6 trillion over their lifetimes in lost revenues and increased social services costs.ⁱⁱⁱ In addition, working-age adults with learning disabilities are twice as likely to be jobless as their peers who do not have disabilities.^{iv} The disconnect between vacant jobs and the available workforce is evidence of the fundamental “opportunity gap” that exists between the evolving American economy – where, by 2018, 60 percent of all jobs will require at least an Associate’s degree^v – and the inadequate education and workforce development systems we currently have in place, especially for under-resourced students. Addressing this misalignment is critical to both jump-starting our national economy and unleashing individual potential.

Beyond the economic imperative of reforming our higher education system, fundamental changes are necessary to ensure equity, especially for students from minority communities or low-income backgrounds, or those with learning and attention issues. According to the Lumina Foundation, “while the overall degree attainment rate is 45.3 percent, rates are much lower for African-Americans (under 30 percent), Hispanics (less than 25 percent), and Native Americans (below 20 percent)... Low-income individuals and working adults also have limited post-secondary opportunities compared to other Americans.”^{vi} In addition to limiting economic potential, limited opportunities for post-secondary attainment also negatively impact the lives of individuals with respect to non-economic outcomes such as access to quality health care and the likelihood of community engagement. Failure to increase post-

secondary attainment among under-resourced students will not only limit individual and collective economic progress, but will further widen the opportunity gap in America.

What We Believe

America Forward is committed to education reform because we believe the work of closing the opportunity gap starts with ensuring that, beginning early in life, every child has a clear path to college and career success, and the support to get there. Today, however, too many K-12 schools, institutions of higher education (IHEs)¹, and communities lack the resources – both in terms of funding and human capital – to establish consistent, aligned systems of support for under-resourced students, and a lack of consistent focus on evidence and outcomes undercuts the ability to make informed investments. In addition, the complexity of the systems referenced above make it difficult for students and families to understand what skills and knowledge are essential to succeed in post-secondary education and the workforce, and how to marshal the resources and programs to secure them

Improving post-secondary outcomes for under-resourced students begins in the K-12 system. Too often, high poverty communities lack the resources to adequately educate and guide students. Addressing this challenge begins with further investing in and improving preparation and support programs for aspiring teachers and school leaders, so that they can address the unique needs of under-resourced students and effectively guide them through rigorous curricula. These curricula, in turn, must provide all students with access to quality post-secondary preparatory coursework. Without high school courses that adequately prepare them for post-secondary work, too many students – disproportionately under-resourced students – must take on high-cost, remedial courses before they ever have access to post-secondary level courses that put them on a path to graduation. By one statistic, 29 percent of first and second year college students at four-year schools and 41 percent of those at two-year schools have enrolled in at least one remedial education course.^{vii} Learning experiences that are linked to post-secondary and career options are another important factor in helping young people make good choices about the opportunities afforded by a post-secondary education. The K-12 system needs to incorporate hands-on learning experiences, including partnerships with higher education, volunteer, and national service organizations.

Even for those students who do successfully graduate from high school, success in post-secondary education and beyond is by no means a given. Even before they enroll, the challenges of navigating the admissions process, selecting an institution and program, identifying disability services and supports (if necessary), and securing financial aid put many students at a disadvantage. For many under-resourced students, this deficit can be made even worse by a feeling that they will be out of place in a post-secondary education setting or that they are academically underprepared. Research shows that low-income and first-generation college students often make choices during the application and decision process that are unlikely to lead to the best outcomes, a result of disparities in access to reliable information and guidance. This speaks to the importance of ensuring that students and their families have access to intensive college and career counseling – including help completing the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA), applying for scholarships, understanding financial aid packages – including the differences between student loans and grants, understanding how to access and receive disability services, and selecting a post-secondary institution – as well as the supports that help prepare students for the post-secondary experience mentally and emotionally. Nonprofit partners can be a

¹ Defined as colleges, universities, institutions of technology, vocational schools, and community colleges

valuable part of this effort, offering schools a cost-effective way to provide one-on-one services to students likely to struggle with the application process.

Once they are enrolled, under-resourced students face a whole new host of challenges. Financial aid is one important challenge – 47 percent of today’s higher education students are supporting themselves and are struggling financially – and students from under-resourced groups remain far more likely than their peers to accrue substantial student loan debt and/or drop out prior to degree completion^{viii} – but this is not the whole story. Many students need additional practical supports, like access to transportation or personal technology. For students with disabilities, access to accommodations can be an enormous issue upon entering higher education. Only 17 percent of young adults with disabilities receive accommodations and support in college, compared with 94 percent of students in high school.^{ix} Other students may need more traditional academic supports to help them deal with the increased rigor of post-secondary coursework. Many students continue to struggle with feelings that they are out of place in college and do not have support systems to help them cope when experiencing academic and other challenges. And for the increasing number of non-traditional students, the difference between success and non-completion may be access to wraparound services and non-academic supports such as affordable childcare; 26 percent of today’s students are also raising children.

In addition to financial aid and practical supports, students also need exposure to skills and experiences that help bridge the gap between college and career. One-third of the \$150 billion in funding under the Higher Education Act (HEA) provides eligible students assistance into workforce credentialing offerings at accredited and certified post-secondary programs. With this in mind, post-secondary institutions should be intentional about creating, or partnering with existing organizations, including employers, to provide, hands-on, out-of-classroom learning experiences that allow students to explore different fields and create tangible linkages between post-secondary work and potential career pathways.

As part of this effort, federal policies must embrace innovation, promote competency, and reassert a focus on outcomes that reflect the needs of the full spectrum of today’s students, not just first-time, full-time students, as well as the demands of today’s economy. Such a shift in our mindset regarding higher education is critical if we are to reduce the number of students unable to complete their post-secondary education program, who are buried under unsustainable debt, or that graduate unprepared for the rigors of the global economy. To meet these challenges requires new strategies to make post-secondary education more responsive to the needs of all students.

Through the work of our member organizations, America Forward has learned that, in order to address these various challenges, the work must be done at an individual student level. As part of that effort, we have learned the power of leveraging effective partnerships to create person-centered, flexible systems of support that are able to respond to the changing needs of under-resourced students. Now, our goal is to apply the lessons we have learned more broadly to the post-secondary education system.

Policy Proposals

Provide clear and actionable information to students and families on post-secondary outcomes, financial aid, and available support services and accommodations

Many under-resourced students and their families struggle to make informed decisions on where to attend college, oftentimes due to lack of information on how to pay for college, uncertainty about the likelihood that they will graduate and move into a successful career, and difficulty understanding

whether or not specific accommodations may be available. Today, information on costs, outcomes, supports, and accommodations at different institutions is oftentimes not reported, or presented in a disjointed manner that makes comparisons across institutions difficult and confusing. At the same time, we are cognizant of the compliance challenges already faced by post-secondary institutions. To address this problem, new federal policies should refine and improve existing information and reporting requirements to both meet the needs of students and ensure that post-secondary institutions are effectively using their limited capacity. The goals of Federal policy should be to:

- Require information about college program costs and outcomes by individual institutions to be publicly posted, including data on persistence and graduation rates among all students, including under-resourced students, part-time students, and adult learners, as well as the average financial aid packages awarded to all students, including Pell-eligible students;
- Establish a common format for consumer financial information published by post-secondary institutions to make it easier for students and families to understand, such as financial aid and award information and outcomes;
- Create a simpler process for submitting the FAFSA application that gives prospective students and families information about post-secondary benefits afforded to them and ensure seamless coordination with the IRS system during the application process;
- Develop strategies to ensure that students and families have relevant information about financial aid packages prior to admission decisions deadlines, including early decision deadlines;
- Require IHEs to publicly provide information on what types of services and supports are available for students, including students with disabilities, both on campus and in the community and how students and their families may access these resources;
- Provide students receiving Title IV aid for career education credentialing with information that shows both the demand for certain workforce skills and regional job opportunity assistance options through the federal workforce development system and other assistance programs; and,
- Require IHEs to accept prior documentation of a disability – such as an Individualized Education Program or a 504 Plan—to serve as sufficient documentation for the purposes of qualifying for disability services.

Target federal funding to develop and scale-up innovations that increase access, persistence, and completion in post-secondary education

Innovation, coupled with a focus on results, is essential to maximizing higher education attainment for under-resourced students. Today, a wide range of new approaches are emerging to support under-resourced students through the college application process, provide integrated supports post-enrollment, accelerate time to completion strategies, and form tangible connections with career opportunities, among others. Moreover, many current practices at the Federal, State, and institution level would benefit from fresh approaches that incorporate recent innovations and best approaches to achieve better outcomes. Pay for Success and innovation fund approaches could accelerate the adoption of these innovations, as could reforms in numerous Federal aid, workforce development, and other education programs. In response to ongoing innovation, the Federal Government should:

- Create a Pay for Success incentive fund to support feasibility study work, to resource evaluations, to help structure Pay for Success projects and contracts, and to contribute to success payments;

- Create a Pay for Success Pell grant premium paid to accredited and certified post-secondary providers that achieve specified retention, completion, and job outcomes among Pell-eligible students;
- Allow income-eligible students concurrently enrolled in high school to access their Pell grants to participate in approved early college high schools by using a Pay for Success or retroactive payment model where students would draw down Pell based on the cumulative number of transferable college credits they earned in the early college high school;
- Continue and evaluate the Experimental Sites Initiative to identify effective, new approaches for Pell funding, including for dual enrollment, Second Chance Pell², and competency-based education;
- Incentivize states to transition to performance-based funding models for institutions of public higher education, which award funding at least partly based on persistence, graduation and other factors, rather than enrollment, while continuing institutional Pell bonuses to prevent exclusionary changes in enrollment practices. Also provide incentives for private, non-profit colleges and universities to increase persistence and completion;
- Establish a competitive grant fund, the College Access and Success Innovation Fund, open to any organization without preference to those that have received federal funding in the past, which reflects a tiered evidence structure that directs the largest grants to organizations that have demonstrated a solution to meet the needs of a previously under-resourced community, while still making funding available to develop new approaches;
- Establish data systems that track participants in college access and success programs and provide information on program effectiveness by program participant profile and dosage;
- Conduct an experimental or quasi-experimental evaluation of college access and success practices to generate evidence about which practices are most likely to get young people into and through post-secondary education;
- Allow for the expansion of awarding Title IV student aid to credits earned through innovative, evidence-based approaches like competency-based models, approved dual enrollment and early college high schools, Portfolio Assessment and other Prior Learning Assessment tools, which focus on subject mastery rather than traditional measures of seat-time; and,
- Support the National Center for Information and Technical Support for Postsecondary Students with Disabilities, which provides disability training for college faculty in addition to providing information to students and families.

Invest in effective partners that provide critical expertise and capacity

Effective partnerships between IHEs and high-quality community partners and intermediary organizations at the local, state, and national level are essential to providing supports for under-resourced students as they progress through their post-secondary careers. Too often, however, such partnerships do not receive adequate support to expand their services, even when students are in desperate need of the resources they provide. New federal policies should intentionally harness the power of effective partnerships to increase post-secondary access and improve outcomes among under-resourced students. America Forward urges Federal policymakers to:

² Second Chance Pell is a pilot program to test new models to allow incarcerated Americans to receive Pell Grants and pursue postsecondary education with the goal of helping them get jobs, support their families, and turn their lives around.

- Incentivize IHEs that participate in the Title IV program to partner with nonprofit entities or develop new, in-house programs (potentially also in partnership with external nonprofits) to provide streamlined academic and non-academic supports and services (or strengthen those already in place), including practical barriers like affordable child care, transportation, food, and housing to ensure that students—especially low-income students, students with disabilities, and first generation college students—persist and complete their program of study for a degree or certificate;
- Through federal legislation, explicitly clarify the potential role of intermediary organizations, which can connect IHEs to a range of nonprofit and for-profit partners, other IHEs, and community-based organizations; and,
- Encourage IHEs to work with qualified community partners, either through external offerings or new, in-house programming, to train higher education faculty on course designs that are accessible to the range of learners on college campuses, and enable faculty and staff to respond effectively to requests for support and accommodation from students with learning differences.

Focus on and emphasize public reporting of outcomes in federal higher education policy

Federal higher education programs have long been focused on access, rather than on whether students are achieving the skills and knowledge they need to obtain and retain employment. A concerted movement towards prioritizing both access and outcomes is just beginning and should be encouraged and accelerated. This can be accomplished in several ways.

- Require the collection and reporting of college enrollment and employment rates for students leaving high school, disaggregated by the high school they graduated from;
- Prioritize a portion of federal student aid funding on outcomes through Pay for Success initiatives designed to boost funding for colleges and universities, and programs operated outside of the traditional higher education system, that deliver on student success outcomes, such as a certain percentage of students achieving a degree, credential, or securing gainful employment;
- Upgrade the Department of Education’s existing College Navigator and College Scorecard websites to provide additional information on outcomes;
- Update the Department of Education’s existing list of Department-wide discretionary grant priorities to include a priority for models that are cost-effective and have a credible evidence base;
- Ensure that required data on teacher and school leader preparation programs reflects program quality. Provide targeted resources to support the collection of relevant data; the evaluation measures for teacher and school leader preparation programs should be meaningful ones, rather than a laundry list, and should include both inputs and outcomes to measure the quality of such programs, including teacher and school leader performance, the number of recent graduates employed, including the number in high-needs schools, and satisfaction survey outcomes. Ensure that teacher and school leader preparation programs utilize data to inform continuous improvement activities; and,
- Subject to appropriate privacy protections, the Federal Government should amend law, regulations, and access protocols to permit federal, state, and local workforce and education agencies, state and local workforce boards, nonprofit workforce development organizations, social enterprises, and post-secondary institutions certified by the Department of Education for participation in Title IV of the HEA to have access to the National Directory of New Hires and to Unemployment Insurance Wage Records.

Establish new forms of accreditation and expand certification options for students that map skills and experience with job placement

In order to improve post-secondary outcomes for students it is critical that IHEs and post-secondary providers recognize the realities facing today's students and consider the core competencies sought by employers in that context. As part of this effort, it is important that post-secondary providers and employers work together to create innovative credentialing and certification programs that reward the development of certain, in-demand skills that apply directly to areas of need in the economy. The Federal Government can take the lead in this effort to:

- Incentivize and assist accrediting agencies to drive quality and outcomes, and incentivize new accrediting agencies to foster innovation in the higher education sector, by focusing on student success outcomes over inputs;
- Unlock federal student aid for students seeking the education and training at newly-accredited, outcome-focused programs, including in proven certificate programs and other opportunities that lead directly to employment;
- Develop a model protocol at the Office of Personnel Management for recognizing micro-credentials (recognizing individual skills or practice) and credentials offered outside of traditional education institutions that takes into account their relevance, rigor and reliability and can be applied to other sectors and companies across the country;
- Create a system whereby micro-credentials are accepted by the Department of Labor as evidence of learning through internships, service year programs, and other experiential learning. The Department of Labor should also be tasked with validating that such credentialed experiential learning programs constitute "vocational education" under the determination requirements of the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) and, therefore, are deemed to be FLSA compliant; and,
- Create a Civilian Service Option for returning military members to provide veterans with much-needed transition time, pathways to education, training for jobs, and the dignity and pride of continuing their service here at home. This mission could be supported as an eligible benefit under the GI Bill, through the Department of Defense transition programs, or through Department of Labor veterans' assistance programs.

Recognize the importance of well-prepared and well-supported teachers, principals, and other school leaders

Teachers and school leaders – including principals, vice principals, principal mentors, and school counselors—have an outsized influence on a student's academic achievement. Because it governs teacher and school leader preparation programs, the HEA plays an important role in ensuring that every student has access to highly effective teachers and school leaders. Any reauthorization of the HEA should ensure that teacher preparation programs better prepare teachers, from Pre-K through grade 12, to provide instruction to under-resourced students, ensure school counselors have the knowledge and skills to support students throughout K-12 education and facilitate the transition to post-secondary education, and that school leader preparation programs better prepare principals and vice principals to be strong instructional leaders, talent managers, and culture builders for all students. Through the reauthorization process, federal lawmakers can support these efforts to:

- Ensure that Title II of the HEA and Title II of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) work in concert with each other and reinforce the same priorities, including consistent definitions and support for effective partnerships between LEAs and IHEs or nonprofits to advance high-quality

preparation and professional development (PD) that raises expectations for current educators and develops teachers, teacher leaders, principals, and other school leaders to meet the same high bar as new educators to support diverse learners;

- Strengthen the Teacher Quality Partnership (TQP) grant program to encourage partnerships between teacher preparation programs and local school districts and incentivize high-quality, clinical-based preparation of effective teachers for high-need schools and subject areas, including residency opportunities and in the classroom experiences;
- Further improve and expand the TQP grant program by allowing partnerships to focus the underlying programs on teacher leaders and school leaders in addition to teachers. Add an assurance that programs are training school leaders to meet the needs of the district(s) or state based on a needs assessment. Finally, require partnerships to report on key measures of effectiveness, fostering continuous program improvement, incentivizing districts to ensure local conditions support program participants' effectiveness on the job, and encouraging deep collaboration between preparation programs and district partners;
- Require Teacher Preparation programs to produce meaningful report cards that reduce the overall number of reporting requirements while focusing on critical outcome measures, and require States to annually report on the performance of preparation programs. To demonstrate diversity, teacher preparation programs should report inputs and outcomes in a transparent way, with data disaggregated by race, ethnicity, gender, and Pell Grant recipient status. For all school leader preparation programs, we recommend collecting methodologically sound data on admissions rates, licensure rates, placement rates, and leadership effectiveness;
- Make targeted research investments in principal and other school leader preparation programs—including those based at IHEs, local education agencies, and nonprofit organizations—to learn more about the leadership practices that correlate with successful outcomes, in addition to other important measures related to program inputs (e.g., admissions rate), processes (e.g., residency or internship hours required), and outputs (e.g., placement rate of graduates into relevant positions). Outcomes to consider include: the percentage of program participants rated effective or above on an evaluation that takes into account multiple measures of leadership effectiveness, the percentage of participants who, as principals, improved school climate over two years, and the percentage of participants who, as principals, improved measures of teacher effectiveness, student achievement, and other student outcomes in their schools. This pilot approach would allow certain programs to move in this direction without confronting the broader challenges of capacity, readiness, and data quality. Moreover, the pilot would provide valuable information for the field on how to implement-outcomes-based renewal decisions and accreditation processes at scale in the future;
- Maintain and enhance the TEACH grant program to support recruitment and retention of educators practice in high-need fields such as special education, mathematics, and science;
- Provide either through the TEACH grant program or a new or re-envisioned fund, targeted incentives for teachers to either take graduate courses needed to teach at the college level (for high school instructors) or to get licensed to teach high school (for college professors) and/or provide incentives directly to institutions to increase the pool of college-credentialed faculty teaching in dual enrollment settings; and,
- In the Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education (FIPSE), add authority for the Secretary to fund the expansion of innovative, outcomes-based training programs for teachers and school leaders, including partnerships to study program components that are predictive of successful outcomes.

Increase access to experiences that directly link classroom learning and credentials with careers

Increasing relevant, meaningful opportunities for students to explore careers in their fields of interest will lead to improved completion rates and increased employment after graduation. It is critical that federal policy encourage IHEs – including in partnership with nonprofits, community organizations, and businesses – to focus on providing hands-on learning experiences that get students out of the classroom and enable them to apply what they are learning to real-world challenges, creating strong linkages between classroom knowledge and career-focused applications. In pursuit of this goal, the Federal Government should:

- Launch a “power skills” grand challenge. Power skills are defined as leadership, grit, critical thinking, problem solving, communication, teamwork, etc., and are highly valued by employers. The Federal Government should use a portion of existing workforce funding to build on progress already made in the field to define and measure these skills and accelerate change through a grand challenge, including incentivizing IHEs to expand evidence-based, out-of-classroom experiences that develop such skills, and sparking a market for job seekers and employees to grow their power skills competencies; and,
- Require that, in addition to on-campus opportunities, at least 50 percent of Work Study grants support extra-mural internships, service-learning, career related work experience, and service year opportunities for eligible students, including Pell recipients, which provide opportunities for students to link learning to experience; enable students to gain college-level learning through their service; and, provide human capital to help other students access and persist in higher education.

Reform student aid programs to reduce the burden of student loan debt

Federal student aid has been primarily focused on access to, rather than completion of, higher education credentials and degrees. Federal student aid programs should include incentives for IHEs to be more focused on individual attainment of degree and certification programs. As part of this effort, financial aid should be flexible enough to meet the unique needs that may arise throughout a student’s term, including being able to draw down student aid responsibly regardless of current award year limitations to account for anticipated and unanticipated costs of textbooks, transportation, housing, and childcare. Examples of this approach could include:

- Restructure Campus Based aid programs under the HEA to partially allocate funds based on degree and certificate attainment;
- Ensure that federal loan repayment and loan-forgiveness programs for those entering teaching, especially in high-poverty schools, are generous, simple, and accessible. Loan support – including deferment and counseling – from day one is important to empowering young people to enter the teaching profession. In addition, ensure that teacher leaders and school leaders (including principals and vice principals) who began their careers teaching in such schools and elect to take on leadership roles remain eligible for loan forgiveness;
- Preserve and enhance the Public Service Loan Forgiveness program intended to incentivize individuals to graduate and work in public service and provide accelerated loan forgiveness (such as three years of credit for each year of full-time service) or enhanced grant aid to students who complete a service year;
- Revive the Academic Competitive Grant and base it on a student’s demonstrated ability to stay on track to completion in the normal period;

- Restore the year-round Summer Pell Grant Program authority to allow students to accelerate their studies and provide support to early college high school and related programs for low-income and under-resourced students earlier without taking on additional debt;
- Simplify the FAFSA further to significantly reduce complexity and make the application more accessible for students and families;
- Offer a lower interest rate for student loans when students select education and training at high performing post-secondary institutions in industry sectors and skills that are identified as in demand locally;
- Ensure student aid is available to students with disabilities who are enrolled but may not take a full course load; and,
- Ensure that federal student loan borrowers have access to affordable student loan repayment programs that help keep their monthly student loan payments affordable and help pay down one's student debt.

Expand participation in Service Year Programs

Service year programs benefit communities while providing participants with opportunities for personal growth, as well as with tangible, transferable skills that are valued by employers. Participation also deepens connections to the school, community, and student network that contribute to persistence and ultimately drive success. As we seek innovative strategies to help ease the transition between post-secondary education and the workforce, federal policies should promote the role of service year programs as an effective and mutually beneficial bridge to the full-time workforce or, if the service year takes place before college, as a bridge to college. Federal policies should:

- Incentivize IHEs to develop a system to award credit for college-level learning gained through a service year or other experience;
- Incentivize pathways to entrepreneurship for young people with a service background by creating a new competitive entrepreneurship program. This program would be open to young people who have served at least one year through a service year program. One thousand young people would be selected annually based on their past community engagement and the 'Big Bet' they detail in their application; and,
- Provide deferment or forbearance for certified service year programs. AmeriCorps members may receive deferment and are specifically eligible for forbearance of their direct student loans. This benefit should be extended to individuals participating in all service year programs that are certified to conform to requirements essentially similar to AmeriCorps, including privately funded service programs. Service year programs move in and out of AmeriCorps funding streams, or have AmeriCorps funding at one site but not another. This change would help to equalize benefits for corps members regardless of the federal funding status of their programs and would make it possible for more individuals to serve.

ⁱ Sullivan, Brian, "Need Work? US Has 3.2 Million Unfilled Job Openings," CNBC, <http://www.cnbc.com/id/44838614>

ⁱⁱ High Growth Entrepreneurs Plan to Continue Growing," Kauffman Foundation, <http://www.kauffman.org/newsroom/high-growth-entrepreneurs-plan-to-continue-growing.aspx>

ⁱⁱⁱ C.R Belfield, H.M. Levin and R. Rosen. "Economic Value of Opportunity Youth," January 2012, www.civicenterprises.net/MediaLibrary/Docs/econ_value_opportunity_youth.pdf

^{iv} Kayne, H.S. (2013). Unpublished data analysis of 2010 data from the U.S. Census Bureau Survey of Income and Program Participation. Data retrieved August 2013.

^v Anthony Carnevale, Nicole Smith and Jeff Strohl, "Help Wanted: Projections of Jobs and Education Requirements through 2018," Georgetown

^{vi} Lumina Foundation's Today's Student website. <https://www.luminafoundation.org/todays-student-statistics>

^{vii} Institute of Education Sciences. National Center for Education Statistics. "Remedial Coursetaking at U.S. Public 2- and 4-year Institutions: Scope, Experience, and Outcomes. NCES-2016-405. <https://nces.ed.gov/pubs2016/2016405.pdf>

^{viii} Rapidly Rising Student Debt Harms Low-Income Students, US News and World Report, 2012, <http://www.usnews.com/education/blogs/student-loan-ranger/2012/01/04/rapidly-rising-student-debt-harms-low-income-students>

^{ix} Cortiella, Candace and Horowitz, Sheldon H. The State of Learning Disabilities: Facts, Trends and Emerging Issues. New York: National Center for Learning Disabilities, 2014

SUPPORT FOR THE AMERICA FORWARD HIGHER EDUCATION POLICY PLATFORM



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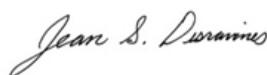
Peggy Brookins

President and CEO
National Board for
Professional Teaching
Standards

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Mimi Corcoran

President & CEO
National Council for
Learning Disabilities



Jean Desravines

CEO
New Leaders



Andrew Wolk
CEO
Root Cause



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Michael Druckman
Executive Chair
Schools That Can



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Shirley Sagawa
President & CEO
Service Year Alliance



Christy Reeves
CEO
Single Stop USA



Elisa Villanueva
Beard
CEO
Teach For America



Phoebe Boyer
CEO
The Children's Aid Society



Mary Ellen
Sprenkel
CEO
The Corps Network



Bob Giannino-
Racine
CEO
uAspire



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Jennifer Green
CEO
Urban Teachers



A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Gerald Chertavian".

Gerald Chertavian Founder & CEO
Year Up



Signature Pending

John Valverde CEO
YouthBuild



A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Kim Mazzuca".

Kim Mazzuca President
10,000 Degrees