

# POSTSECONDARY SUCCESS

## OVERVIEW

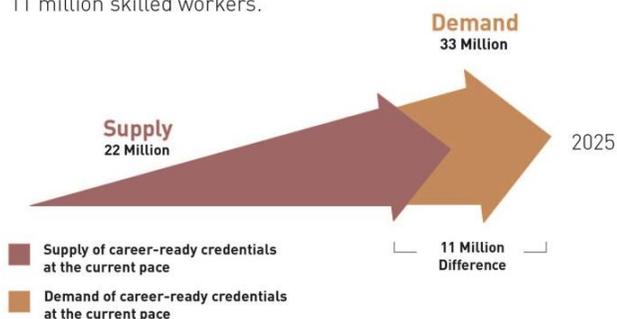
Our vision is a U.S. higher education system that propels social mobility and economic development. To realize that vision, we are working with partners to ensure that more students complete education after high school.

Higher education – everything from career training to doctorates – has been a bridge to opportunity for millions. Students with post-high school credentials are more likely to be employed and earn more, better positioning them to support themselves and give back to their communities.

But for too many, that bridge has become too narrow, too hard to navigate, with a toll too high. This is especially true for low-income and first-generation students, students of color, and working adults, who make up the majority of today’s students. Research indicates that a low-income student is five times less likely than a high-income student to have a degree by age 24. That’s unacceptable.

## Want a job in 2025? Finish college.

By 2025, America will face a shortfall of 11 million skilled workers.



Source: Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce

gatesnotes

Unless many more students make their way to a credential, our nation will suffer from a shortage of the skilled workers needed to ensure we can fill jobs at home and remain competitive around the world.

According to one of the nation’s leading research centers on education and the economy, our colleges and universities are currently on track to produce 11 million fewer career-relevant certificates and degrees than our economy will require by 2025.

That is why we are partnering with institutions that are dramatically changing what they do to make the path to a credential clearer and eliminate unnecessary roadblocks and costs for students committed to their goals.

Our efforts to support these institutions focus on three priorities:

1. **Innovation** that helps students get on a path to a certificate or degree after high school, and stay on it through graduation;
2. **Collaboration** among colleges, universities, and other organizations that are committed to implementing and sharing these innovations so that they reach many more students; and
3. **Incentives** that promote innovation and collaboration across colleges and universities.

## INNOVATION

Navigating the path to a certificate or degree can be challenging – and costly. Many students come to college without certain knowledge or skills or with credits from one or more institutions. Too often, these students get stuck in a maze of policies and options, spending money they don’t have on courses they don’t need. And for many, the road ends before graduation.

That’s why we are working with leading colleges and universities to implement innovations that help students identify and get on a path to a credential, stay on that path, and ensure that they are learning along the way. These innovations include:

*Digital learning tools* that tailor content to students’ strengths and needs, helping them navigate courses that historically have had high failure rates.

*Technology-enabled advising* that provides real-time information to students and educators about potential barriers to graduation and resources to overcome them before a student falls off track and makes potentially costly mistakes.

*Redesigned remedial courses* that focus on what students truly need to succeed and reduces the amount they spend on classes that don't count for credit.

*Streamlined transfer processes* that provide clear guidance to students and do not require them to repeat the same course just because they changed institutions.

*Emergency aid programs* that help students with short-term financial needs so that they don't have to choose between a car repair or child care and staying in college.

## COLLABORATION

Colleges and universities are used to competing with each other on everything from rankings to athletics. But in a time of rising expectations and limited resources, a growing number of institutions are seeing the value of working together to solve common problems.



That's why we are supporting partnerships that bring together a wide range of colleges and universities and organizations committed to change that promotes greater student success at an affordable cost. These partnerships focus on implementing, integrating, and expanding innovations that serve students, and to sharing insights and lessons learned with other institutions to avoid reinventing the wheel.

*Learn more about the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation's Postsecondary Success Strategy at [postsecondary.gatesfoundation.org](http://postsecondary.gatesfoundation.org). Please subscribe to our [Postsecondary Success Notes Newsletter](#), which offers news and updates from our team, discusses challenges and solutions, and shares the exciting work being done by our partners and throughout higher education.*

## INCENTIVES

Collaboration and innovation in higher education don't just happen. Institutions are encouraged – or discouraged – to make choices about how they serve students based on how they are funded and held accountable. That's why we support policy advocacy at the federal and state levels, focusing on two key areas:

*Financial aid* that helps more students get to and through college.

Research shows that when financial barriers are removed for high achieving



low-income students, they succeed at the same or higher rates than their peers. This means simplifying the aid application process, which serves as a barrier to millions of low-income students, and providing incentives in institutional, state, and federal aid programs for students to persist in and finish their programs.

*Data and information* that contribute to better decision-making. Much of the information that students, educators, and policymakers need to make key decisions are either not available or do not include critical outcomes, students, or institutions. Those gaps drive our work with partners to improve the quality and accessibility of information about student achievement and institutional performance. This information will help students navigate their paths more easily, assist institutions in figuring out which students need help (and when), and guide policymakers in deciding where and how to invest taxpayer funds.

Guided by the belief that every life has equal value, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation works to help all people lead healthy, productive lives. In developing countries, it focuses on improving people's health and giving them the chance to lift themselves out of hunger and extreme poverty. In the United States, it seeks to ensure that all people—especially those with the fewest resources—have access to the opportunities they need to succeed in school and life. Based in Seattle, Washington, the foundation is led by CEO Susan Desmond-Hellmann and Co-chair William H. Gates Sr., under the direction of Bill and Melinda Gates and Warren Buffett.

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