

**COMPLETE
COLLEGE
AMERICA**

Learning & Leading

**HOW CCA IS
ADVANCING
the College
Completion
Agenda**



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LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT



Yolanda Watson Spiva, Ph.D.
President

When Complete College America (CCA) was established 13 years ago by our visionary founder, Stan Jones, Stan and his team boldly challenged the status quo in higher education. They questioned the notion of college access as the end goal, upending the belief that if students could just get into college, they would be able to earn the degree they needed to meet their goals. By taking a close look at the data and counting *all* students, CCA showed that once students enrolled, the vast majority of them encountered structures and systems that were not set up to meet their needs. They were forced to waste time and money, leading them to drop out or face crushing debt.

Not content with this status quo, CCA and the initial Alliance of 17 states led the way to fundamentally change postsecondary education to meet the needs of every student. I am proud to say that this work is getting results. Today, more students are completing college on time, and our growing Alliance of 49 states, systems, and consortia is transforming institutions and restoring the promise of higher education.

This report reflects on the progress we have made, but it also highlights the work that remains. Even as postsecondary completion numbers are rising, institutional performance gaps persist, particularly for historically excluded students.

Continuing to increase completion rates while closing these gaps will require relentless focus and a commitment to equity. CCA is ready to build on what we have learned and lead this next step in the evolution of higher education. Some highlights of recent and upcoming CCA work include:

- **No Middle Ground: Advancing Equity Through Practice** shows how colleges can assess their practices to identify and address inequities. This guide has kicked off a series of publications focused on equity, including how to craft equity-driven policy and how colleges can identify metrics to advance their institutional goals and agendas.

- **No Room for Doubt: Moving Corequisite Support from Idea to Imperative** lays out the case for shifting from traditional prerequisite remediation, highlighting that corequisite support not only improves outcomes for all students but also closes institutional performance gaps across racial and ethnic student groups.
- The **Historically Black Colleges and Universities Digital Learning Infrastructure Convening** in April highlighted ways institutions, technologists, and philanthropy can work together to create successful digital programs that give students purpose, momentum, structure, and support.
- The iconic **ACT: Policy and Action Summit** returned in June for the first time in five years, bringing together state teams to explore the critical relationship between policy and practice and learn about updates to the game-changing CCA strategies.
- At **BREAKTHROUGH**, our 2022 Annual Convening, CCA, the Alliance, and our partners explored innovative policies, perspectives, and practices that are creating breakthrough change for students and society.

I want to thank our Alliance members and partners, who are leading this movement; our network of Fellows and staff, who are providing expertise to support their efforts; and the CCA Board members, who guide our work. Your relentless determination to help all students succeed inspires us every day. I would also like to thank our generous donors, who support not only our programs but also the work we do to bring together states to showcase high-impact efforts, collect and share data to track progress, and conduct research to shape federal and state policy—all of which enables the systems change that collectively makes our work possible. In particular I would like to thank MacKenzie Scott for a three-year grant that will support our ongoing operations.

We look forward to continuing to learn and work together to advance the college completion agenda so that all students, no matter their circumstances or lived experiences, have the opportunity and support they need to succeed.

Changing the Conversation

CCA 1.0

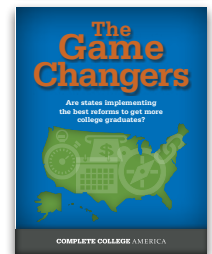
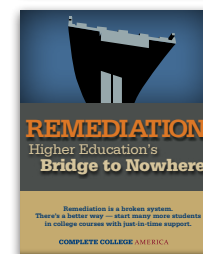
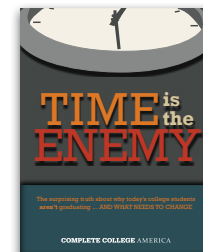


Higher education has long held out a singular promise: If you earn a degree, you will be able to get a good job to meet your goals. But traditionally much of the focus—from institutional systems and structures to the measures used to track progress—was on students who were enrolled in college for the first time and attended full time. Higher education largely ignored the thousands of students who had different experiences and responsibilities, including those who attended part time; had to leave and return; or were juggling some combination of families, jobs, and school. These students were much less likely to complete.

Seeing Every Student

Complete College America was established in 2009 with a bold idea: To realize the promise of higher education, we must see—and count—every student. Data revealed that higher education was not set up to help the vast majority of students succeed, causing these students to waste valuable time and money on credits they did not need. The result: high dropout rates, which led to shrinking family incomes, weaker economic competitiveness, squandered taxpayer and philanthropic investments, and hollowed out civic engagement.

Access to college was not enough. Students needed and deserved institutions that were set up to ensure that every individual, no matter their circumstances or lived experiences, could go on to earn a degree or credential of value—and earn it on time. The initial phase of CCA's work involved advocacy and research to change the conversation and focus on fundamentally transforming higher education to be student centered. To meet this goal, we formed the CCA Alliance with courageous leaders from 17 states. Together, we built a movement that highlighted the need for change and focused on finding practical solutions to increase college completion rates for all students.



2009

Complete College America founded;
Alliance formed with 17 member states

2010

Held 1st Completion Academy with 68
attendees and 20 staff and content experts

2010

Complete Tennessee
Act passed



Our work led to the creation of numerous ground-breaking tools and resources highlighting the obstacles to success. In 2013, we introduced the Game Changers, a series of research-based strategies that guided institutions as they rethought their structures and supports for students.

As we worked with states, systems, institutions, and partners to change their approach to serving students, scale highly effective structural reforms, and implement policies that improve student outcomes, success stories emerged. (Our 2018 digital report, [Creating a Culture of Completion](#), captures some of these highlights.) More students were completing college on time, but institutional performance gaps persisted. Closing those gaps, while continuing to improve overall completion rates, is the focus of the strategic plan we developed in 2019 that guides the current phase of our work.



“

I’ve been engaged with CCA for more than three years, and I still feel like CCA, as an organization that has looked at what higher education can do to promote student success, has **the best set of answers of any organization that I am affiliated with.** As a region, as a provost of a campus that is significantly making efforts in most of the Game Changer areas and starting to see pretty firm results in several, **CCA has had as much an impact on our student success work as anything else.”**

—Rob Ducoffe, Provost & Vice Chancellor, Academic and Student Affairs,
University of Wisconsin–Parkside

2011

Published *Time Is the Enemy*, a ground-breaking report showing that time is one of the biggest obstacles to college completion

2011

Created the Common Completion Metrics with the National Governors Association

2011

Led the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation’s \$10 million Completion Grant Challenge to spur innovative strategies to increase graduation rates in 10 states and scale those tactics across the country

2012

Published *Remediation: Higher Education’s Bridge to Nowhere*, changing the conversation about remedial education and establishing CCA’s call for corequisite support

Leading a Movement and Transforming Institutions

CCA 2.0



CCA 1.0 was about changing the conversation and launching a movement; CCA 2.0 continues to build on that foundation. Today, our work centers on leading the growing college completion movement and implementing evidence-based strategies to transform systems and institutions so that higher education can serve as an engine of equity, prosperity, and hope.

Turning Our Vision into Reality

The CCA Alliance now includes:

- 49 states, systems, and consortia;
- 30 fellows, who are leaders in education and serve as content experts and thought partners, sharing their knowledge with Alliance members to embrace bold reforms and implement the CCA strategies;
- A wide variety of Communities of Practice, through which CCA convenes Alliance members to collaborate around a shared vision and partner in efforts to advance their college completion efforts; and
- Numerous partner organizations.

Together, we envision a nation in which postsecondary institutions, policymakers, and systems of higher education welcome, invest in, and support students through and to on-time completion so that every student—regardless of race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, or familial educational achievement—has equal opportunity to access and complete a college education or credential of value.

CCA VALUES

Student-centered institutions

Equitable structures and outcomes

Data-informed decisionmaking

Systemwide collaboration

Implementation at scale

2012

Published *Guided Pathways to Success: Boosting College Completion*, establishing the nationwide guided pathways movement

2013

Published *The Game Changers*, outlining strategies to improve college completion rates

OUR THEORY OF CHANGE

We believe that if we

Inform and influence policy and practice at the institutional level through **scaling and adoption of strategies, implementation support** by content experts, and providing **research and resources**

Provide clear, bold perspectives on the policies and strategies that close gaps through **awareness campaigns, publications, presentations, and data coaching**

Inform state and federal policymakers, thought leaders, and influencers by providing **data-driven policy strategies, outreach, and assistance**

Then we can

Drive behavioral change in institutional leaders, faculty, and staff

Ensure that data is used to drive decisionmaking

Drive state and federal policy change

Which will lead to

Elimination of institutional performance gaps

Increases in the number of Americans earning degrees and credentials of value

More equitable and improved outcomes for individuals, states, and our nation

2014

Published *Four-Year Myth*, which focused on the impact of time to degree, reinforcing CCA's completion agenda

2014

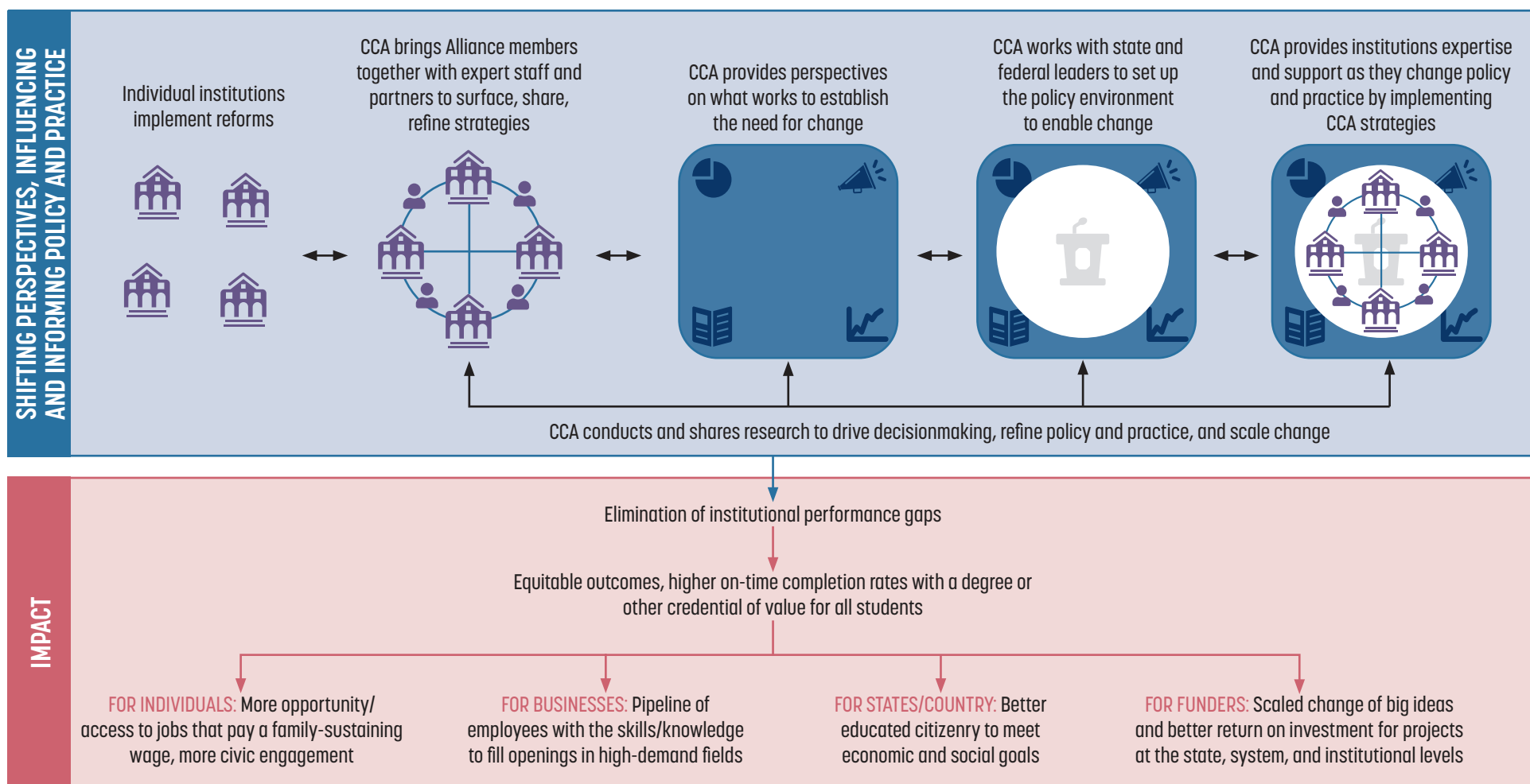
Received \$1.5 million from Strada Education Network to pilot Purpose First, which aligns guided pathways with career outcomes

2015

Testified before the U.S. Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions on how to address the college completion crisis

CHANGE IN ACTION

CCA is a learning organization. We recognize that even though our efforts have led to higher completion rates, more work needs to be done to turn our vision into a reality and continue to enact our theory of change, particularly for historically excluded students. We also need to bring in states and institutions that have not yet taken up the work of improving completion rates. We will meet this goal through our unique focus on both systemic and institutional change.



2015

Launched Houston Guided Pathways, which served as a model and precursor to the Metro Momentum Pathways at sites supported by ECMC Foundation

2016

Hosted the Coreq Congress planning workshop with California higher education institutions to develop a path to scale corequisite support

2019

Developed the first Complete College America strategic plan

The Equity Imperative

Throughout our work, we prioritize supporting projects that will address the root causes of historically excluded communities. We focus on equity in everything we do, infusing it in our work across the Alliance by:

- Communicating equity goals and the strategies for achieving them through our four pillars of success and related resources to support implementation;
- Using data to maintain accountability in identifying and closing institutional performance gaps;
- Recognizing the sensitivity and complexity of tracking issues related to equity;
- Prioritizing support for institutions that serve large populations of BILPOC (Black, Indigenous, Latinx, People of Color) students, students from under-resourced families, and adult learners; and
- Ensuring that equity goals are not at odds with state financial incentives and accountability measures.

“

MOCAN's work to ensure BILPOC students and students from low-income communities can access, afford, and complete college, requires putting Purpose First. **With CCA's support, we're transforming institutions to support today's students."**

—Laura Winter, Executive Director, Missouri College & Career Attainment Network (MOCAN)

CCA'S FOUR PILLARS OF SUCCESS

PURPOSE

Aligning the college experience to each student's goals for the future

- First-Year Experience
- Career Exploration
- Academic & Career Alignment
- Adult Learner Engagement

STRUCTURE

Building course road maps that make the path to a degree or valuable workplace credential clear

- Math Pathways
- Meta Majors
- Academic Maps & Milestones
- Smart Schedules
- Stackable Certificates & Credentials

MOMENTUM

Designing multiple avenues for students to get started, earn credits faster, and stay on track to graduate

- Credit for Competency
- Multiple Measures
- Corequisite Support
- Dual Enrollment
- 15 to Finish/Stay on Track

SUPPORT

Addressing student needs and removing barriers to academic success

- Active Academic Support
- Proactive Advising
- 360° Coaching
- Student Basic Needs Support

2019

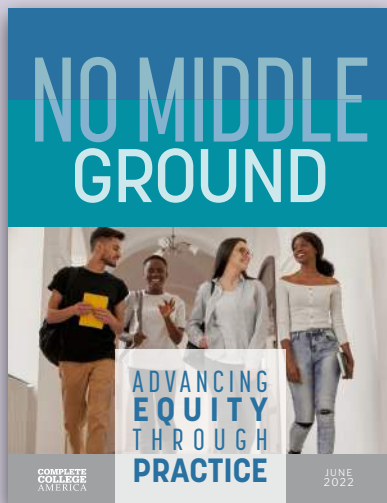
Selected as 1 of 13 organizations to begin the blueprinting phase for the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation's Intermediaries for Scale

2020

Strengthened CCA financial and human resources by moving operations to an internal management structure

EQUITY STARTS WITH US

Equity is not just something we talk about, it is what we do. In addition to promoting equity in the initiatives we lead and the measures we use to track progress, we are committed to promoting equity within our organization.



CCA's 2022 guide shows how institutions can promote equity while implementing CCA strategies.

We have brought together a team who are diverse, in terms of race/ethnicity, lived experience, and professional expertise. Most of our staff members have worked in Minority-Serving Institutions, Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), and other postsecondary institutions, so they have practical experience with the challenges of creating transformational change and closing institutional performance gaps. We similarly prioritize this diversity and expertise in our network of Fellows, Board, content experts, and vendors.

Internally, we provide ongoing individual and team coaching sessions to improve our individual and organizational equity efforts. And we are continuously re-examining language and practice to ensure that we underscore essential ideas, acknowledge the people affected by inequity, and are clear and consistent across our communications. For example, we use the following terms in this report:

- ▶ **BILPOC (Black, Indigenous, Latinx, People of Color).** CCA chose this term in the context of its work on educational attainment. Using CCA's metric of college completion, the data shows consistent institutional performance gaps for Black, Indigenous, and Latinx students.
- ▶ **Historically excluded/historically under-represented/historically underserved.** All of these terms refer to groups that have been denied access to resources (e.g., education and health care) as a result of institutional racism. In the past, CCA used the word *marginalized* in this context. CCA uses the term *historically excluded* now because it most accurately describes the cause of institutional performance gaps. The term *racially minoritized* underscores the fact that *minority groups* is a designation created by those in power so certain groups could be marginalized or excluded.
- ▶ **Institutional performance gaps.** These are gaps among student groups in completion rates and other outcomes. This term puts the focus on the institutional barriers that are the root causes of inequities, whereas the term *equity gaps* implies that students are the cause of (and/or are responsible for changing) gaps in performance and completion.

Our Strategic Priorities



TO ENACT OUR THEORY OF CHANGE, OUR STRATEGIC PRIORITIES INCLUDE:



REACH AND INFLUENCE

Be the voice of college completion and a recognized leader of efforts to eliminate institutional performance gaps nationwide.



RESULTS AT SCALE

Facilitate the implementation of highly effective strategies to boost college completion rates and eliminate gaps in opportunity and achievement.



OUTREACH BY THE NUMBERS



**15 WEBINARS WITH
1,000 ATTENDEES** in 2021



21 PODCASTS
in 2021–22



**40 WORKSHOPS &
CONVENINGS** in 2020–22



2020

Began promoting the Postsecondary Data Partnership's common data framework to depict data on institutional performance gaps across predictors of college completion

2021

Published *No Room for Doubt: Moving Corequisite Support from Idea to Imperative*, laying out the case for shifting from traditional prerequisite remediation



EMERGENT INNOVATION

Proactively identify new and evolving practices to ensure that the completion agenda reflects the most effective, creative, innovative strategies being incubated throughout the United States.



OPERATIONAL EXCELLENCE

Optimize our operational and fund development processes, capitalizing on staff strengths to foster a high-achieving, accountable, and results-driven environment.



BOARD IMPACT

Build upon our board's expertise and networks of influence to advance the mission.



2021

Launched the Digital Learning Infrastructure Initiative with six HBCUs to co-design a culture of digital learning and student success

2021

Launched the PBCC-HBCC Network, funded by the Lumina Foundation and the Annie E. Casey Foundation, with 22 predominantly black community colleges in eight states to align academic programs for adult learners of color with workforce needs

2022

Published *No Middle Ground: Advancing Equity Through Practice*, showing how colleges can assess their practices to identify and address inequities

Our Growing Impact



Our reach is growing. In 2020, we served more than:

1,500,000
LATINX STUDENTS

954,000
BLACK STUDENTS

7.2
MILLION
STUDENTS

426,000
ASIAN OR NATIVE HAWAIIAN/OTHER
PACIFIC ISLANDER STUDENTS

53,000
INDIGENOUS STUDENTS



Alliance members are seeing the results of their work with CCA:

10%

increase in credentials
and degrees awarded
across Alliance members since 2016

100%

OF ALLIANCE MEMBERS
significantly increased on-time
graduation rates at four-year
institutions by 2020



MOST MEMBERS increased this rate by
at least **5-10 PERCENTAGE POINTS**



12 MEMBERS increased this rate by
10-15 PERCENTAGE POINTS

90%

OF ALLIANCE MEMBERS
increased on-time
graduation rates at two-year
institutions by 2020



11 MEMBERS more than
DOUBLED this rate

Moving the needle has meant shifting policy, perspective, and practice. Following are some specific examples of how we have made a difference:

POLICY

- CCA has helped **many states** develop policy around **reverse transfer of credit, credit for competency, common course numbering, academic maps, 15 credits per semester for full-time students**, and more.
- In **19 states**, CCA has helped guide policy on **corequisite support**.
- CCA has worked with **20 states to consider success outcomes for student groups** such as BILPOC and historically excluded students **as part of the appropriations process**.
- CCA policy work and data sharing, especially around measures such as time to degree and credits to degree, have influenced **financial aid formulas**, helping students attend full time.
- CCA policy support helped the **Complete College Georgia initiative nearly double on-time graduation rates** for community college students in five years.
- **Indiana saw a 30 percent increase in bachelor's, associate, and certificate attainment** in five years after working with CCA to promote full-time students taking 15 credits per semester along with policies requiring degree mapping and credit caps.
- Thanks to CCA advocacy, legislation such as the **Complete College Tennessee Act requires institutions to be evaluated on student success metrics** rather than enrollment.

PERSPECTIVE

- CCA partnered with the National Governors Association to create **Common Completion Metrics**—a standardized approach to data that served as a precursor to the Postsecondary Data Partnership (PDP). The metrics prompted the **University of Hawaii to create the first 15 to Finish/Stay on Track campaign**, which CCA then helped scale to hundreds of institutions.
- CCA's *Guided Pathways for Success* report spearheaded the **pathways movement**, providing clear next steps needed to act on this national imperative.
- CCA has advocated for the **replication of corequisite support and math pathways** across the nation, working to create the conditions for change required to implement the strategies at scale.

PRACTICE

- Since 2015, the **City University of New York** system—a leading CCA Alliance member—**has experienced a 70 percent increase in on-time graduation rates** for two-year colleges and a **20 percent increase in credential attainment** across the system.
- **New England Alliance members saw an almost 20 percent increase in the three-year graduation rate** for all community college students four years

after implementing Game Changer reforms in 2016—with graduation rates improving even more for Black students (58 percent increase) and Latinx students (24 percent increase) during the same time frame.

- Between 2012 and 2018, **West Virginia increased the number of historically excluded students passing college-level introductory English by 160 percent** at two-year colleges following the implementation of corequisite support.
- Through advising innovations and reforms based on guided pathways, **Georgia State University increased its graduation rate by 23 points** under the leadership of CCA Fellow Tim Renick.
- With the ongoing support of CCA, **Colorado has more than doubled its on-time completion rate** for community college students in five years thanks to reforms ranging from tech-enabled pathways to curricular innovations.

Building on Our Success



While our work with Alliance members will continue to benefit increasing numbers of students as more cohorts enter institutions that have put the CCA strategies in place, institutional performance gaps persist. Over the past three years, we have implemented a number of new initiatives and programs to focus on those who have been left behind and scale up proven strategies. The following are a few examples.

Intermediaries for Scale: CCA was one of six organizations selected to participate in the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation's \$100 million Intermediaries for Scale project. Over the next five years, CCA will collaborate with teams at 80 institutions nationwide. Together, we will create the required conditions to initiate and sustain transformational work aimed at improving college completion outcomes for students from under-resourced families and BILPOC students.

This grant also supports our efforts to grow the PDP—a nationwide data hub designed to help institutions evaluate their own services and completion strategies to improve student outcomes.

Policy, Equity, and Practice Initiative: With a \$1.75 million grant awarded by Ascendium Education Group in 2021, CCA is working with higher education systems to address the shortcomings in higher education that have historically affected BILPOC students, students from under-resourced families, and those who are the first in their families to go to college.

Working with an initial cohort consisting of Arkansas, Montana, and Oklahoma, CCA is implementing a three-phase design over three years with in-depth support from partner organizations to build capacity around and implement equity-centered completion strategies chosen from the CCA pillars of success.

Kentucky Purpose First: A \$550,000 grant from Lumina Foundation in 2022 will support the implementation of the Purpose First strategy in eight two- and four-year institutions across Kentucky. Purpose First serves as the missing link in aligning academic major decisions and career choices to create clear connections between labor needs, guided pathways, and students' career goals, particularly for BILPOC students. The work will include creating a database of preferred competencies for careers and high-demand jobs at the regional level, creating or optimizing comprehensive academic maps that include potential career outcomes, and collaborating with faculty members to start integrating competencies in curriculum and on syllabi.

These initiatives are only some of the systems- and institutional-level work we are doing to realize our vision of more students completing higher education on time with a degree or other credential of value.

JOIN US

Our journey that started with 17 Alliance members continues to gain momentum. States, systems, and institutions that have implemented the CCA strategies are seeing their efforts pay off. Their groundbreaking efforts are leading to higher completion rates and brighter futures for their students, their local and state economies, and our society. Join our growing network of Alliance members and Fellows to create transformational change and close institutional performance gaps so that all students have the opportunity to succeed.

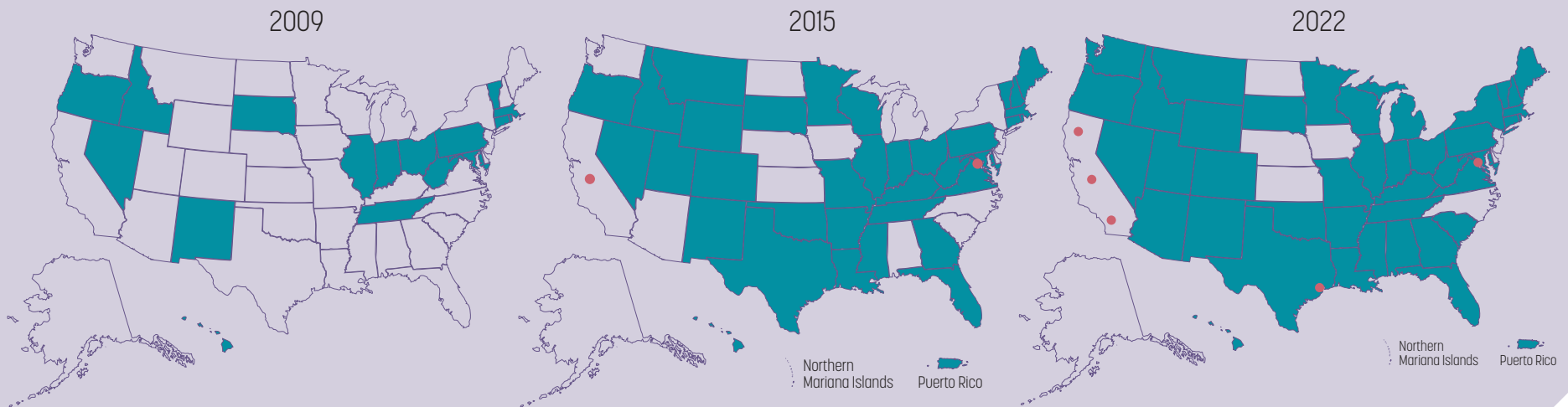
“CCA has an unparalleled approach to student success that engages the attributes, strengths, and qualities of a vast array of individuals who bring an energy of excellence and enthusiasm to the field.”

—Kijua Sanders-McMurtry, Ph.D., Vice President for Equity and Inclusion, Posse Liaison, Mount Holyoke College



CCA ALLIANCE MEMBERS

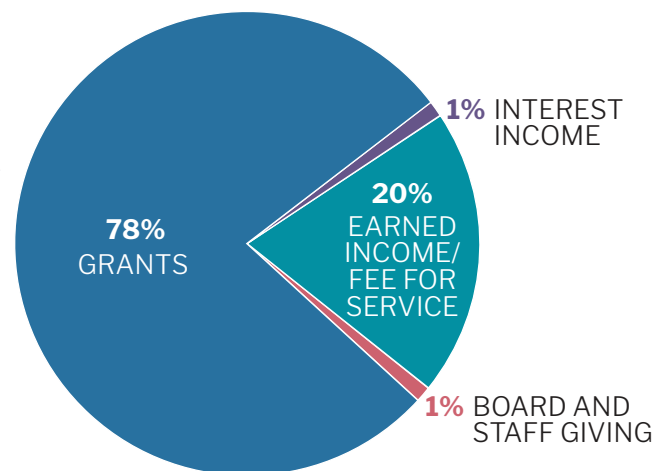
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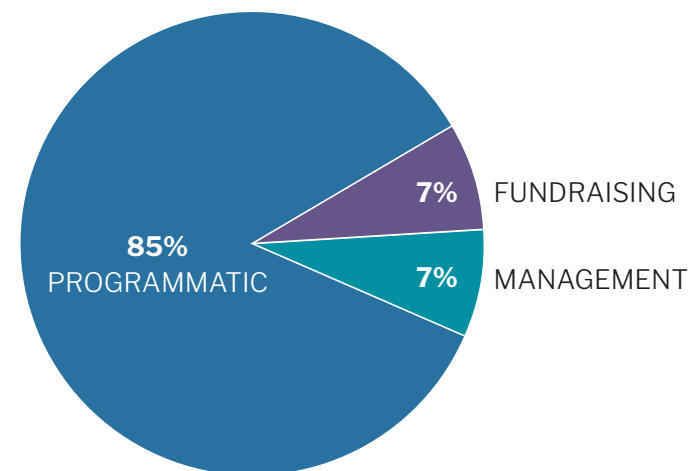
Financials

In 2021, CCA more than doubled our revenue from 2019, prior to the pandemic. This revenue was generated from increasingly diverse income streams. At the same time, our expenses remained focused on programmatic efforts, including bringing together our Alliance members to share and learn from each other, collecting data and conducting research to identify best practices, and supporting initiatives that are proven to improve postsecondary completion rates, particularly for historically excluded students.

Percentage of Revenue



Percentage of Expenses



Note: Totals may not add to 100% due to rounding.

“

Our partnership with CCA has been remarkable.

They are system-reformers in the truest sense.

CCA has inspired us to adopt a ‘whatever it takes’ mindset and has helped us set a bold agenda driven by data, equity, and a commitment to being student centered. We have leaned on their team for everything—from advancing a statewide policy agenda to implementing best practices on campuses across the state to providing regional professional development. **Their leadership made so much of our work possible.”**

—James McCoy, Vice President, Academic Affairs, College of Southern Nevada



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