
Docket Item:

First Generation Student Success Grant Program

Summary:

On January 16, 2020, the HECC released a Request for Applications (RFA) for projects and programs that will increase the enrollment and completion of students in Oregon community colleges that are from underrepresented races/ethnicities, are low-income, and/or are first generation. This RFA is intentionally designed to support all four of the HECC's Strategic Action Areas: reporting to steer progress, funding for success, streamlining learner pathways, and expanding opportunity through outreach.

Materials:

Competitive awarded grant funds of approximately \$5,000,000 will be awarded for a three-year period (July 1, 2020 to June 30, 2023). These funds originated with the passage of House Bill 3063 (2015), which created ORS 341.526. This investment was based on the success Portland Community College had had with its Future Connect Program and supported other community colleges in creating similar programs.

Based on feedback from two biennia of grantees and from a review of the current research on student success, the grant has been changed in two key ways. First, the grant award period will be longer, enabling programs to grow and develop and minimizing the staff turnover and short implementation periods of other grants. Second, applications must now include a research-based completion strategy that will increase the number of students completing college-level math and writing in their first year, reduce enrollment in development education course, and/or or increase the number of students completing 18 or 36 credits in their first year.

Research conducted by the Community College Research Center on Early Momentum Metrics has found that when students complete college-level English and math in their first year, their completion rates are more than double when compared to baseline students. Similarly, completion rates are much higher for students who complete at least a half time load of credits (15 semester credits, equivalent to 18 quarter credits). If students successfully earn full-time or more than full-time credits, their award rates increase even further.¹ A strategy for increasing the completion of college-level math and writing courses in the first year is the use of co-requisite course models where students are placed directly into college-level courses, regardless of placement test score, and provided additional supports.

This RFA is intentionally designed to support all four of the HECC's Strategic Action Areas: reporting to steer progress, funding for success, streamlining learner pathways, and expanding opportunity through outreach. The RFA does this by requiring applicants to submit information about the enrollment and pass rates of all of their math and writing courses, as well as the number of first-time students completing college level math, writing, or both. Successful grantees will report that same information disaggregated by race/ethnicity, first-generation status, and low-income status so that we can track progress over time. By connecting investments to research, and then tracking progress, staff are optimistic that grantees will be able to increase completion rates for students and continue to grow a community of practice that will support other colleges in adopting impactful practices as well.

Staff Recommendation:

This is an informational and discussion item only.

¹ See "Early Momentum Metrics: Leading Indicators for Community College Improvement" for more information, found here: <https://ccrc.tc.columbia.edu/media/k2/attachments/early-momentummetrics-leading-indicators.pdf>.