

# Aim Higher

---

Access | Affordability | Completion

## Community College Student Success Act

Community colleges enroll nearly half of all undergraduate students and the majority of all undergraduate students of color. These institutions provide an affordable education and training close to home, and are demonstrated engines of economic mobility. Despite the undeniable role of community colleges in closing our nation's skills gap through education and workforce training, these institutions are often underfunded. This leaves community college students without the support necessary to attain a degree or credential. In fact, students at community colleges receive less public support than students at four-year research institutions. Studies show that only [20 percent of community college students graduate after three years and just 35 percent graduate after five years](#).

Access to college means little without degree completion. Research is clear that students who do not complete and borrow loans are at [greater risk of defaulting](#). If Congress truly values the importance of community colleges and the students they serve, we must increase our investment in these institutions. Data from innovative student support programs in higher education prove that if students have comprehensive supports, they are more likely to graduate.

City University of New York's Accelerated Study in Associate Programs (ASAP)—a rigorously evaluated and replicated program that removes barriers to full-time study, builds degree momentum, and improves timely graduation—is one such program. According to an [MDRC randomized trial](#), CUNY's ASAP program nearly doubled three-year graduation rates for participating students from 22 percent to 40 percent. ASAP has a [proven track record](#) of success not only in New York City, but at colleges in Ohio as well. This makes ASAP scalable and replicable. While ASAP requires upfront investment from colleges, due to the significant increase in graduation rates, ASAP actually drives the cost per degree down by [11.4 percent](#).

The **Community College Student Success Act (CCSSA)** would provide funding to public community colleges across the country, with priority given to under-resourced colleges with high percentages of low-income and minority students. This funding will help institutions develop and implement programs modeled after ASAP that boost degree completion through the provision of comprehensive student support services, including:

- *Academic Advising:* Advisors will provide ongoing, academic and personal advising to students including helping to clearly lay out a three-year graduation plan and creating strong transfer pathways for students interested in continuing their education.
- *Academic and Career Support:* Students on academic probation or who have been referred to developmental courses will be required to meet weekly with a tutor. Students will also meet with an on-campus career counselor or participate in career services events at least once a semester to promote career planning and success.
- *Financial Support:* Students will receive a tuition waiver to cover the gap between tuition and fees and financial aid. Additionally, students satisfying all the meeting requirements will receive a financial incentive, such as a transportation pass or gas card, at least once per month.

In addition to these core supports, institutions receiving CCSSA grants would have the flexibility to tailor their program to their unique needs. This flexibility will provide students with additional supports that work, such as financial assistance to assist with the cost of textbooks, living expenses, child care or funding gaps for summer courses. To ensure accountability to taxpayers and policy makers, CCSSA would require all grantees to monitor and track student participation and measure academic progress toward clearly articulated program goals.