

Completion Grants

Removing barriers to graduation

In 2017, the UIA launched a three-year strategic financial intervention initiative to provide assistance to students who are approaching graduation but face modest financial hurdles that restrict their ability to enroll, persist, and complete their degree.

Through support from Ascendium Education Group and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, we are implementing and studying the use of completion grants to help lower income students who have attained senior status but whose unpaid account balances mean they will be dropped from classes and/or blocked from enrolling in final courses.

[“One Trick for Keeping Kids in College: Tiny Debts That Force Them to Leave”](#)

FAST COMPANY

[“A Small Sum Can Make a Big Difference in Student Success”](#)

THE CHRONICLE
of Higher Education

[“Rethinking Financial Aid: Small Grants Make a Big Difference in College Completion”](#)

The Washington Post

KEY ACTIVITIES

Each UIA institution has established a completion grant team (comprised of student success stakeholders such as financial aid, registrar, and student accounts) and developed a local process for identifying eligible students and disbursing aid each term, including summer. Low-income students who have accepted all other aid and are 1-2 semesters from graduation can receive up to \$1,000 to help them pay down their account balance, register, and persist.

The UIA collects recipient data each semester and surveys students on the impact of the awards. The evaluation also includes data collection on a sample group of eligible

non-recipients at each institution for comparison. We convene campus completion grant leads regularly to monitor project implementation and capture project learning.

OUTCOMES

UIA institutions have awarded more than 2,800 completion grants to date. As of the beginning of spring 2019, 79% of fall 2017 awardees, 83% of spring 2018 awardees, and 85% of fall 2018 awardees had either graduated or were still enrolled.

We are developing a completion grants playbook to share project learnings and recommendations for campuses looking to implement this approach.

FUNDERS

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