

117TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

S. 2755

To authorize the Secretary of Education to award grants to States to empower public institutions of higher education in the States to provide student support services to students from low-income backgrounds, historically underrepresented students, first-generation college enrollees, parenting students, students with disabilities, and student veterans.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

SEPTEMBER 15, 2021

Mr. HEINRICH introduced the following bill; which was read twice and referred to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions

A BILL

To authorize the Secretary of Education to award grants to States to empower public institutions of higher education in the States to provide student support services to students from low-income backgrounds, historically underrepresented students, first-generation college enrollees, parenting students, students with disabilities, and student veterans.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as the “College Completion
5 Fund Act of 2021”.

1 **SEC. 2. HIGHER EDUCATION COLLEGE COMPLETION FUND**
2 **PROGRAM.**

3 (a) PURPOSE.—It is the purpose of this Act to sup-
4 port completion and retention activities designed to ensure
5 the postsecondary success of students from low-income
6 backgrounds, historically underrepresented students, first-
7 generation college enrollees, parenting students, students
8 with disabilities, and student veterans in public institu-
9 tions of higher education serving a significant number of
10 such students.

11 (b) DEFINITIONS.—In this Act:

12 (1) COMPLETION RATE.—The term “completion
13 rate” means—

14 (A) the percentage of students from an ini-
15 tial cohort enrolled at a public institution of
16 higher education in the State that is a 2-year
17 institution who have graduated from the insti-
18 tution or transferred to a 4-year institution of
19 higher education; or

20 (B) the percentage of students from an ini-
21 tial cohort enrolled at a public institution of
22 higher education in the State that is a 4-year
23 institution who have graduated from the insti-
24 tution.

25 (2) ELIGIBLE INDIAN ENTITY.—The term “eli-
26 gible Indian entity” means the entity responsible for

1 the governance, operation, or control of a Tribal Col-
 2 lege or University.

3 (3) INSTITUTION OF HIGHER EDUCATION.—The
 4 term “institution of higher education” has the
 5 meaning given the term in section 101 of the Higher
 6 Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 1001).

7 (4) SECRETARY.—The term “Secretary” means
 8 the Secretary of Education.

9 (5) STATE SERVICE PROVIDER.—The term
 10 “State service provider” means a nonprofit organiza-
 11 tion that receives Federal funding or State funding
 12 to provide services commensurate with guidelines for
 13 those services and is in good standing with regard
 14 to such funding.

15 (6) TRIBAL COLLEGE OR UNIVERSITY.—The
 16 term “Tribal College or University” has the meaning
 17 given the term in section 316(b)(3) of the Higher
 18 Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 1059c(b)(3)).

19 (c) AUTHORIZATION OF COMPLETION FUND.—

20 (1) RESERVATION OF FUNDS FOR ELIGIBLE IN-
 21 DIAN ENTITIES.—From the total amount appro-
 22 priated to carry out this section for a fiscal year, the
 23 Secretary shall reserve 2 percent for grants to eligi-
 24 ble Indian entities to increase participation and com-
 25 pletion rates of students from low-income back-

1 grounds, historically underrepresented students,
 2 first-generation college enrollees, parenting students,
 3 students with disabilities, and student veterans.

4 (2) GRANT AUTHORIZATION.—The Secretary
 5 shall make grants, from allotments under paragraph
 6 (3), to States to enable the States to distribute
 7 funds to participating public institutions of higher
 8 education in the State to provide student support
 9 services to increase participation, retention, and
 10 completion rates of students from low-income back-
 11 grounds, historically underrepresented students,
 12 first-generation college enrollees, parenting students,
 13 students with disabilities, and student veterans.

14 (3) DETERMINATION OF ALLOTMENT.—

15 (A) AMOUNT OF ALLOTMENT.—From the
 16 total amount appropriated to carry out this sec-
 17 tion for a fiscal year and not reserved under
 18 paragraph (1), the Secretary shall allot to each
 19 State having an application approved under this
 20 section an amount, subject to subparagraph
 21 (B), that shall be equal to the sum of—

22 (i) the amount that bears the same
 23 relation to 50 percent of the amount ap-
 24 propriated and not reserved for such fiscal
 25 year as the number of residents in the

1 State aged 5 through 17 who are living
2 below the poverty line applicable to the
3 resident's family size (as determined under
4 section 673(2) of the Community Services
5 Block Grant Act (42 U.S.C. 9902(2)))
6 bears to the total number of such residents
7 in all States; and

8 (ii) the amount that bears the same
9 relation to 50 percent of the amount ap-
10 propriated and not reserved for such fiscal
11 year as the number of residents in the
12 State aged 15 through 44 who are living
13 below the poverty line applicable to the in-
14 dividual's family size (as determined under
15 section 673(2) of the Community Services
16 Block Grant Act (42 U.S.C. 9902(2)))
17 bears to the total number of such residents
18 in all States.

19 (B) MINIMUM AMOUNT.—The allotment
20 for each State under this section for a fiscal
21 year shall not be an amount that is less than
22 1.0 percent of the total amount appropriated to
23 carry out this section for the fiscal year and not
24 reserved under paragraph (1).

25 (4) SET ASIDES.—

(A) EVIDENCE-BASED STUDENT SUCCESS PROGRAMS.—Each State that receives a grant under this section shall set aside not less than 20 percent of grant funds for evidence-based student success programs, which are programs designed to improve persistence, credit accumulation, completion, or career success, carried out by an institution and that—

(i) meet—

(I) the requirements for evaluation as described in subsection (a)(2)(B) of section 4611 of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, as amended (20 U.S.C. 7261(a)(2)(B)); or

(II) the requirements for evaluation as described in subsection (a)(2)(C) of section 4611 of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, as amended (20 U.S.C. 7261(a)(2)(C)); and

(ii) provide students with a program advisor to each eligible student participating in such program who provides comprehensive academic and personal advising

1 to the eligible student, including moni-
 2 toring of academic progress of the eligible
 3 student, and may provide each eligible stu-
 4 dent with financial incentives, such as tui-
 5 tion assistance, transportation assistance
 6 or a gas card, free tutoring and career
 7 services (which can include benefit coun-
 8 seling) to eligible students in order to cre-
 9 ate a community with eligible student par-
 10 ticipating in such program.

11 (B) PERMISSIVE.—Each State that re-
 12 ceives a grant under this section may set
 13 aside—

14 (i) not more than 5 percent of grant
 15 funds for administration, capacity building,
 16 research, evaluation, and reporting; and

17 (ii) not more than 2 percent of grant
 18 funds for technical assistance to State
 19 service providers.

20 (d) STATE STRATEGIC PLANS.—

21 (1) IN GENERAL.—A State that desires to re-
 22 ceive a grant under this section shall submit an ap-
 23 plication to the Secretary at such time, in such man-
 24 ner, and containing such information as the Sec-
 25 retary may require, including a State strategic plan.

1 (2) DEVELOPMENT OF STATE STRATEGIC
2 PLAN.—Each State strategic plan shall be developed
3 with input from each of the following:

4 (A) 2-year public institutions of higher
5 education in the State.

6 (B) 4-year public institutions of higher
7 education in the State.

8 (C) The State workforce development
9 board established under section 101 of the
10 Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (29
11 U.S.C. 3111).

12 (D) A Tribal College or University with a
13 campus located in the State.

14 (E) State service providers.

15 (F) The State department with jurisdiction
16 over children, youth, and family services.

17 (3) CONTENT OF STATE STRATEGIC PLAN.—
18 Each State strategic plan shall include the following:

19 (A) Information on the state of the public
20 institutions of higher education in the State, in-
21 cluding the following:

22 (i) A description of the distribution of
23 funds to be provided from the grant to
24 participating public institutions of higher
25 education in the State.

1 (ii) A strategy for adopting a diverse
2 portfolio of promising and evidence-based
3 practices.

4 (iii) Annual benchmarks for student
5 outcomes.

6 (iv) Information about the evaluation
7 of interventions proposed to be funded by
8 the grant.

9 (v) A description of the State's plan
10 for an equity audit of higher education fi-
11 nancing.

12 (vi) Rates of enrolled students who re-
13 ceived a Federal Pell Grant under subpart
14 1 of part A of title IV of the Higher Edu-
15 cation Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 1070a et
16 seq.).

17 (vii) Demographics of enrolled stu-
18 dents, including students from low-income
19 backgrounds, historically underrepresented
20 students, first-generation college enrollees,
21 parenting students, students with disabil-
22 ities, and student veterans.

23 (B) A plan to increase student attainment
24 and completion rates or graduation rates of all
25 students enrolled at public institutions of higher

1 education in the State, with a particular focus
 2 on students from students from low-income
 3 backgrounds, historically underrepresented stu-
 4 dents, first-generation college enrollees, par-
 5 enting students, students with disabilities, and
 6 student veterans through student support serv-
 7 ices, cross-agency engagement, and collabora-
 8 tion among 2-year programs, 4-year programs,
 9 and workforce systems.

10 (e) INSTITUTIONAL PARTICIPATION.—

11 (1) ELIGIBILITY.—A public institution of high-
 12 er education that desires to receive assistance under
 13 a grant made under this section shall submit to the
 14 State in which the institution is located a notifica-
 15 tion that the institution desires to opt into participa-
 16 tion under this section.

17 (2) DEVELOPMENT OF STRATEGIC PLAN.—A
 18 State that desires to receive a grant under this sec-
 19 tion shall solicit input from public institutions of
 20 higher education in the State in the development of
 21 the State strategic plan.

22 (3) INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORT.—A State that re-
 23 ceives a grant under this section shall not limit stu-
 24 dent support services to students enrolled at public
 25 institutions of higher education in the State that

1 participated in the development of the State stra-
2 tegic plan, but shall provide student support services
3 to students enrolled in participating public institu-
4 tions of higher education in the State.

5 (f) USE OF FUNDS.—A State that receives a grant
6 under this section shall distribute funds to participating
7 institutions of higher education in the State for evidence-
8 based and promising practices in improving retention and
9 completion rates, including the following:

10 (1) Student support services to support reten-
11 tion, completion, and success, including—

12 (A) faculty and peer counseling;

13 (B) use of real-time data on student
14 progress; and

15 (C) incentives for students to stay on
16 track.

17 (2) Direct student support services, including—

18 (A) transportation accessibility;

19 (B) room and board or assistance to ad-
20 dress housing instability;

21 (C) addressing food instability;

22 (D) remedial education;

23 (E) tutoring, academic supports, and en-
24 richment services; and

25 (F) emergency financial assistance.

1 (3) Access to health care and mental health
2 services on or near campus.

3 (4) Support helping students enroll in public
4 benefits.

5 (5) Issues with respect to dependents of stu-
6 dents, including—

7 (A) high-quality daycare and prekindergarten access during traditional school hours;

8 (B) childcare access during non-traditional
9 hours; and

10 (C) prenatal and early childhood education
11 classes.

12 (6) Development of soft skills.

13 (7) Career coaching, career counseling and
14 planning services, and efforts to lower student to advisor ratios, including—

15 (A) networking and work-based learning
16 opportunities to support the development of
17 skills and relationships; and

18 (B) boosting experiences necessary to obtain and succeed in high-quality jobs.

19 (8) Reforms to developmental education, including—

20 (A) utilizing career pathways; and

21 (B) improving transfer student success.

1 (9) Efforts to recruit, retain, and develop di-
2 verse faculty and other instructional staff.

3 (g) EVALUATION AND REPORTING.—

4 (1) DESIGNATION OF INDEPENDENT AGENCY.—

5 The State department with jurisdiction over higher
6 education in each State that receives a grant under
7 this section shall designate an independent agency to
8 compile and evaluate data linked to institutional pro-
9 grams and student outcomes funded with grant
10 funds.

11 (2) COMPILATION OF INFORMATION.—Each
12 independent agency designated under paragraph (1)
13 shall compile longitudinal data tracking student par-
14 ticipant outcomes, including the following:

15 (A) Graduation rates, disaggregated by age
16 (25-years of age and younger, and older than
17 25-years of age), gender, income, race and eth-
18 nicity, and first-generation college status—

19 (i) at 100 percent of the normal time
20 for graduation;

21 (ii) at 150 percent of the normal time
22 for graduation; and

23 (iii) at 200 percent of the normal time
24 for graduation.

1 (B) Transfer out rates, disaggregated by
2 age (25-years of age and younger, and older
3 than 25-years of age), gender, income, race and
4 ethnicity, and first-generation college status.

5 (C) Withdrawal rates, including rates of
6 students who withdraw to seek employment in
7 a related field of study.

8 (D) The percentage of students who con-
9 tinue enrollment at the institution after the
10 first year of enrollment.

11 (E) The median time to degree completion.

12 (F) Career outcomes and employment
13 data, which may include earnings, within 1 year
14 of completion, within 3 years of completion, and
15 within 5 years of completion.

16 (G) Career outcomes and employment data
17 for student participants who did not complete
18 the program in which the student was enrolled
19 within 1 year of leaving the program, within 3
20 years of leaving the program, and within 5
21 years of leaving the program.

22 (3) TECHNIQUES.—Each independent agency
23 designated under paragraph (1) shall evaluate the
24 academic outcomes using quasi-experimental tech-
25 niques.

1 (4) REPORT.—Each independent agency des-
2 ignated under paragraph (1) shall submit to the
3 State department with jurisdiction over higher edu-
4 cation a report that includes findings of the data
5 compiled under paragraph (2).

6 (5) REPORT TO CONGRESS.—Each State de-
7 partment with jurisdiction over higher education
8 that receives a report under paragraph (4) shall sub-
9 mit the report to the Department of Education and
10 the authorizing committees, as defined in section
11 103 of the Higher Education Act of 1965 (20
12 U.S.C. 1003), at such time and in such matter as
13 the Secretary of Education determines appropriate.

14 (6) EXCLUSIONS.—Each independent agency
15 designated under paragraph (1) shall not track data
16 with respect to individuals who transfer, move, or
17 seek employment outside of the State.

18 (h) MAINTAINING NET STATE OPERATING SUPPORT
19 FOR HIGHER EDUCATION.—

20 (1) IN GENERAL.—A State that receives a
21 grant under this section shall maintain net State op-
22 erating support for higher education for each fiscal
23 year for which the State receives a grant under this
24 section at a level that is not less than the level that
25 is equal to the average of such net State operating

1 support for higher education for the 3 fiscal years
2 preceding such fiscal year.

3 (2) WAIVERS.—

4 (A) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary may
5 grant a waiver to a State from the requirement
6 under paragraph (1) for a fiscal year if the
7 State demonstrates that—

8 (i) the net State operating support for
9 higher education for such fiscal year as a
10 percentage of total revenue available to the
11 State that will fund higher education for
12 such fiscal year is not less than such per-
13 centage for the previous fiscal year; and

14 (ii) unexpected or uncontrollable cir-
15 cumstances prevent the State from main-
16 taining such State support.

17 (B) NO REDUCTION FOR SUBSEQUENT FIS-
18 CAL YEAR.—If the Secretary grants a State a
19 waiver under subparagraph (A) for a fiscal
20 year, a determination of the required level of
21 net State operating support for higher edu-
22 cation for subsequent fiscal years shall exclude
23 the fiscal year for which the waiver was grant-
24 ed.

1 (i) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—There
2 are authorized to be appropriated to carry out this section
3 \$62,000,000,000 for the period of fiscal years 2022
4 through 2031.

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