

Completion by Design

Concept Paper

COMPLETION BY DESIGN CONCEPT PAPER

SEPTEMBER 2010

An initiative of the postsecondary success team

Hilary Pennington, Director of Education, Postsecondary Success, and Special Initiatives

Mark David Milliron, Deputy Director for Postsecondary Improvement

Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation

What Is Completion by Design?

Completion by Design is a next major step in community college reform. It is a five-year investment that will enable groups of community college campuses within states to collaborate on the design and implementation of a model pathway to completion. The model pathway will draw from the body of research and experience generated by previous initiatives and the specific circumstances of grantees to systematically implement a whole range of proven and promising practices from intake to completion. We believe that if community colleges restructure the student experience, if they build linkages and interdependencies among the systems that touch the lives of the students, and if they establish clear accountability for student success, they can dramatically and efficiently increase rates of high-quality credential completion for the target population of low-income young adults.

COMMUNITY COLLEGES AND THE FOUNDATION'S POSTSECONDARY SUCCESS STRATEGY

By one recent count, there are 1,173 community colleges in the United States enrolling an estimated 8 million credit-earning students, or 43 percent of all U.S. undergraduates (AACC, 2010). While they have much in common with one another, their governance and financing can be as decentralized as the word “community” implies, which can pose challenges to implementation of large-scale reform efforts.¹

With few admission requirements, low tuition, and physical campuses located within 25 miles of 90 percent of the country's population, these open-door institutions are designed to reduce academic, financial, and geographic barriers to postsecondary education.

For some, community colleges are a destination, with short-term career certificates and licenses that facilitate employment. For others, they are a gateway, with general education courses and two-year associate in arts degrees designed for ready transfer into four-year institutions.

Community colleges offer first, second, and third chances to millions of Americans. Yet as easy as it is to enroll in one, it is also easy to drop out. Increasing attention is focusing on the community college completion gap, the wide and hard-to-bridge gulf between the number of students who start a community

college program and the number who finish or successfully transfer to a four-year college. The gap is most extreme and damaging for low-income young adults—many of whom arrive on campus with poor academic preparation and skills.

The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation is urgently concerned about this population of students. Completion by Design is a key part of the foundation's ambitious postsecondary success strategy, which will invest \$475 million over four years with the goal of doubling the number of low-income young adults who earn a postsecondary credential with labor market value by age 26. Completion by Design, like the larger postsecondary success strategy that it supports, works across three critical fronts:

1. improving postsecondary institutions using a student-centered, performance-oriented approach that emphasizes best practices and focuses on completion
2. supporting young adult students by providing information, tools, guidance, and support to facilitate academic momentum and address the barriers to persistence, progress, and completion
3. building support with the public by shining light on the public value of an educated workforce and nurturing commitment to the financial and policy changes needed to keep institutions and students focused on completion

¹ The definition of “community college” is changing. For the purposes of this initiative, the term is used broadly for public two-year institutions, as well as those that award some four-year degrees but have historically been and are still primarily two-year community or junior colleges, even if their name or accreditation status has changed.

WHY WE NEED COMPLETION BY DESIGN

College can be intimidating, especially for low-income and first-generation students who lack peer and family support to help them navigate. Many community college programs—developmental education, for example—take a one-size-fits-all approach and are designed to process large numbers of students efficiently, sometimes with little coordination among themselves.

Students entering this world, especially those with weak preparation or without the benefit of significant family experience and support, face a series of high-risk moments, junctures at which they are most likely to drop out or give up. These moments are concentrated early in the college experience—some even before they reach their first class—and occur less frequently as students build academic momentum and the confidence required to persist.

These moments could be considered potential loss points—where thoughtful intervention can make the difference between success and failure. Some of the most important include:

- **College entry.** Orientation, placement, and advising are key to getting students into the right course of study and giving them confidence to succeed.
- **Academic catch-up.** This includes developmental education and successful completion of gatekeeper courses such as college algebra and freshman composition. Fewer than 30 percent of academically underprepared students get beyond this stage.
- **Program of study.** Students who do not maintain a solid rate of progress once they get into their core academic programs are still at high risk of not completing their degrees.

Along with these potential loss points, there are also momentum points, such as the transition from education to work or four-year transfer. Students are more likely to succeed academically and in the job market if colleges make early connections between academic programs and career goals or four-year transfer options.

Completion by Design aims to mitigate the loss points and fortify the momentum points for low-income young adults. The precise nature and timing of these points can vary by institution and program, and it is important for colleges to clearly identify theirs and plan interventions accordingly. Completion by Design provides support for a campus- or college-based analysis to learn where along the pathway to completion students are being lost and to bring the right people together to design a model pathway to completion that employs proven and promising practices at every critical moment from enrollment to credential completion.

DISTINGUISHING COMPLETION BY DESIGN

Previous projects and initiatives, notably Achieving the Dream, have shown the power of data-driven reform in higher education. They have also helped build an inventory of proven and promising practices upon which Completion by Design grantees will be able to draw (ATD, 2010).

Completion by Design takes the college completion movement to the next level in two ways. First, it addresses the full continuum of the student experience from start to finish—asking grantees to systematically use the lessons of prior reforms and demonstration projects simultaneously rather than investing in an isolated best practice. Second, it directly addresses the full spectrum of organizational and administrative factors—from resources to program leadership to state policy—that can make or break a serious effort at reform. These include the need for:

- time, leadership, courage, and resources to make difficult changes
- infrastructure to transfer and disseminate new approaches, practices, and systems
- teamwork that crosses barriers among departments, organizational units, faculty and administrators—all committed to the success of the same student body
- collaboration among community colleges and campuses that can otherwise be isolated, in part because of their community-based identities and in part because of a culture of self-reliance
- institutional and state policies, funding formulas, and tuition and aid structures that provide incentives and accountability for student success

The biggest challenge to success is inertia, the tendency to do things the same way they've always been done. Based on organizational theory and the experience of related initiatives, Completion by Design recognizes the importance of overcoming inertia and therefore seeks to:

- engage and provide support to leadership within community colleges to promote and institutionalize success
- cultivate and strengthen systems and leadership to support innovation, communication, and adoption
- empower an interdisciplinary, cross-campus delegation of faculty and administrators to work together to analyze their own systems, model and learn from other systems, and build a new and better system, a model pathway to completion that employs proven and promising practices and uses next-generation technology in ways that reduce costs and improve results

- generate connections within community colleges and among multiple community colleges and campuses to mitigate isolation and create a whole that exceeds the sum of its parts
- lead by example over a two-year implementation/ demonstration period during which the model pathway to completion is carefully monitored to take advantage of opportunities and overcome financial, regulatory, or policy barriers as they arise

WHAT COMPLETION BY DESIGN WILL DO

Completion by Design is a five-year initiative to help low-income young adults progress through community college more quickly and with a higher chance of completion. Research has demonstrated that interrupted or extended college pathways are especially high-risk for students from lower-income backgrounds (Goldrick-Rab, 2006), who tend to be concentrated at community colleges. The initiative therefore asks community colleges to analyze their systems in order to understand where they are failing and succeeding, create a model pathway for the student experience from intake to completion based on what they learn, introduce proven and promising practices at key loss and momentum points, build linkages among the systems that touch the lives of the students, and establish clear accountability for student success and completion. Completion by Design is founded on the belief that this type of comprehensive reform will significantly increase the odds of success for the target population of students.

The loss and momentum framework

Although the picture varies slightly from college to college, an extensive body of research and experience has given us a good understanding of the high-risk and high-opportunity moments for community college students. (The short list of selected references at the end of this concept paper will point interested readers in the right direction to learn more.) The loss and momentum point framework provides the four key moments—connection, entry, progress, and completion—through which each grantee will be asked to chart a model student pathway, using our best current understanding of effective practices.

Proven and promising practices

Given a clear picture of where loss can happen or momentum can be gained for low-income students, Completion by Design sets out a specific process by which reform is to occur. It asks grantees to examine their own systems, to model and learn from other systems, and to collectively build and implement a better system, to reach consensus on the design of a model pathway to completion that all cadre campuses will adopt and implement. This model must incorporate proven and promising practices across all dimensions of the student experience.

While the notion of best practices has been diluted by over-use, we can probably agree that some practices generate demonstrably better results than others and should be considered proven or at least promising. When something is proven, and there is indisputable evidence that it works better than other methods currently in place, the foundation will expect it to be applied as widely as possible. In promising cases, where there is good but not conclusive evidence of effectiveness, ongoing, careful evaluation across the Completion by Design initiative will help refine and expand our knowledge at each phase in planning and implementation. A guide to proven and promising practices is currently under development.

Defining success

Until recently, many initiatives focused on getting more lower-income students into college. It is not enough, however, just to get in. It's finishing that changes lives.² The focus of Completion by Design is on helping lower-income students achieve credentials that will improve their economic future and—since parents' education level tends to predict that of their offspring—the future of their children and grandchildren.

For the purposes of this initiative, successful completion counts as:

- finishing an occupational certificate with labor market value
- completing a two-year associate in science (A.S.), associate in arts (A.A.), or other similar credential
- successfully transferring to a bachelor degree-granting institution with a credential

² In one example, as part of Achieving the Dream, the Washington State Board of Community and Technical College Systems (SBCTC) conducted a study examining educational experiences, attainment rates, employment rates, and earnings of adults five years after they enrolled at an SBCTC institution. Short-term training, participation in adult basic education, or enrollment in a limited number of college-level courses did not lead to an increase in employment rates or earning power. Only students who enrolled for at least one year at a community or technical school and/or completed either a degree or a certificate saw a measurable increase in wages (Prince and Jenkins, 2005).

How Completion by Design Will Work

COMPLETION BY DESIGN GRANTEE SELECTION

Completion by Design will provide significant resources for comprehensive change to a small number of grantees that serve large populations of students. The grants will be awarded through a competitive application process to applicants in one of the nine high-priority/high-opportunity states who demonstrate the understanding and capacity needed to implement a model pathway to completion for a significant number of students. In order to be eligible, applicants will need to designate:

- a managing partner that will be the primary grantee and will orchestrate the overall initiative within the state. No more than one grant will be made in any state, although multiple colleges can collaborate on an application coordinated by a strong managing partner. A managing partner can be any multi-campus college or district that awards degrees and credentials primarily at the level of associate and below.
- at least four cadre colleges or campuses that serve a significant population of low-income young adult students. Cadre campuses can be peers of the managing partner, subsidiary campuses of the managing partner, or a combination of both. Cadre campuses must be willing and able to design and implement policy changes as a group. Cadre campuses will designate key individuals representing core administrative and academic functions as the delegation in charge of implementing the initiative.
- a state policy lead agency or organization that is in a credible position to ensure that the grantee has the support needed to make the best use of state resources and to waive or change policies identified as obstacles to the model path to completion

The managing partner, cadre colleges, and state-level policy lead will be responsible for collaborative implementation of Completion by Design.

QUALITIES OF STRONG APPLICANTS

Experience in previous initiatives demonstrates the importance of strong institutional-level leadership and commitment in effective reform efforts.

Examples of qualities and characteristics that the foundation would like to see both in the managing partner and in the community colleges or campuses that the managing partners propose as cadre campuses include:

- commitment to increasing the credential completion rate for low-income young adults
- experience implementing a successful strategy to improve credit accumulation or credential completion rates
- willingness to reallocate human and financial resources to achieve better outcomes
- ability to monitor attendance and academic progress of the Completion by Design student cohort in real time
- commitment to using data to inform policy, programs, and practices
- ability to use technology effectively to improve academic and student services
- ability to lead the initiative as it expands to significant scale

ELIGIBLE STATES

Completion by Design will launch in a subset of the foundation's nine high-priority/high-opportunity states: Arizona, California, Florida, Georgia, New York, North Carolina, Ohio, Texas, and Washington. These states are of particular interest to the foundation because they have:

- significant proportions of the nation's community colleges
- significant proportions of the nation's community college population
- substantial numbers and proportion of low-income young adults (ages 16-26)
- favorable political environments where postsecondary education reform is a legislative, financial, or leadership priority

Because the leadership, commitment, and capacity of the managing partner are essential to the success of Completion by Design, the states in which Completion by Design is launched will be based on the selection of managing partners.

IMPLEMENTING PROVEN AND PROMISING PRACTICES AT THE LOSS AND MOMENTUM POINTS

Each campus delegation will be responsible for recruiting a significant number of young adults to enroll in the model pathway to completion for each of at least four semesters. Completion by Design is not a pilot program, but is intended to transform entire campuses. A significant pilot cohort (at least 100-200) should be enrolled initially at each campus, with each subsequent cohort size increasing over the course of the initiative until it encompasses all students for whom the model pathway is appropriate.

These young people constitute the Completion by Design student cohort. Whether campuses use an academy approach that creates a separate environment within the college for cohort students, or whether they choose to integrate the new pathway into their primary academic programming, campuses must ensure that:

- The students are touched by every element of the pathway.
- They can monitor the students on an individual basis in terms of experience, persistence, and progression.
- They are implementing the model in such a way that it is readily expandable to accommodate larger and larger numbers of students.

For each loss and momentum point, there are key points of intervention and proven and promising practices that can positively influence outcomes. Each cadre will be expected to reach consensus on a model pathway to completion that draws on these practices, the cadre campuses' knowledge and experience in the field, and the knowledge and experience of outside experts and advisers. The outline that follows highlights the likely components of the model pathway initially, although adaptation may occur as continuing evaluation of the experiences of the Completion by Design student cohorts provides important information about what works for whom and why.

Loss point #1: college entry

This is the student's first engagement with the institution—initial contact. Colleges may lose between 10 and 15 percent of their potential student body at this juncture.

Point of intervention: intake

Examples of promising practices:

- mandatory orientation, including financial aid counseling and awareness and assistance in navigating systems and services
- user-friendly online materials that make it possible for students to refer back to documents in an easy-to-access format on an as-needed basis
- no-late-registration policies to ensure that students do not miss any class time at the beginning of the term and have time to complete the orientation

Point of intervention: assessment

Examples of promising practices:

- contextualized testing so that students understand how the assessments are used and their significance in determining class enrollment and course of study³
- pre-placement test preparation for students that eliminates cold testing and provides time and tutoring for subject material review
- test preparation programs ranging from one-week review courses to summer bridge programs to help students test into college-level work or higher levels of developmental education
- better and broader diagnostics that assess aptitude for occupational opportunities as well as what students need in order to be successful in college-level work
- early testing for high school juniors so they can focus on improving academic skills during their senior year and meeting college-ready standards
- assessments linked to advising so that students have the benefit of informed advisers who can interpret testing results and help students make better occupational and educational choices
- use of next-generation technology to diagnose specific needs and implement highly individualized learning plans

Point of intervention: placement

One example of a promising practice is differentiated placement with no opt-out.

For efficiency's sake, placement systems are sometimes fairly crude, with just a few options and cut scores. More differentiated analysis of results and individualized placement can be one way to improve individual student results and time to completion.

³ Studies indicate that community college students lack an understanding of placement testing and its consequences. For a summary and for further references to this research, see Goldrick-Rab's overview in "Promoting Academic Momentum at Community Colleges" (2007).

Loss point #2: academic catch-up and gatekeeper courses

Students are most likely to drop out during the process of academic catch-up that includes developmental education and transition into the gatekeeper college algebra and freshman composition courses. Sixty percent of all community college students enroll in at least one developmental education course in their community college career. Unfortunately, fewer than 25 percent of students who start in developmental education complete a credential or degree within eight years of enrollment (Bailey, 2009). Completion by Design cadres will have the opportunity to improve both the structure and the content of developmental education. While there is much work yet to be done in this area, research is pointing to a number of promising practices worthy of consideration.

Points of intervention: developmental education and gatekeeper courses

Examples of promising practices:

- mandatory student success courses that teach study skills as well as help students develop career goals and formulate a personal academic plan
- alternative remediation using next-generation technology to accelerate or compress developmental course content and allow students to cover more ground more quickly; or modularization that breaks the course into modules that enable students to progress at their own pace; or contextualization that integrates remediation into content and career courses; or project-based learning that allows a student to acquire academic skills through real-life activities
- peer and cohort communities that place students together as a cohort so that they can build relationships and connections that are mutually beneficial, supporting one another both emotionally and academically through collaborative learning
- early-warning/early-intervention systems so that student attendance and progress are monitored in real time and counselors and faculty are alerted and accountable for following up to re-engage the student and support his/her re-entry
- tutoring and supplemental instruction to facilitate successful completion of college algebra and freshman composition gatekeeper courses
- use of technology to enable self-paced learning, reinforce classroom instruction, and provide an alternative to seat time
- academic plans for each student that prescribe an individual course enrollment sequence with both near-term (one-year certificate) and longer-term credential milestones

Loss point #3: program of study

After students successfully make the transition from pre-college to college-level work by completing the freshman composition and college algebra gatekeeper courses, they must complete a set of requirements to accumulate credits and earn a credential. By this point, colleges should have helped students build academic momentum so that they are engaged in the learning process and approach their assignments with confidence and commitment. Not only does momentum allow students to complete sooner, but studies have shown that students with academic momentum are more likely to persist (Adelman, 2006). Cadres should monitor attendance, performance, and engagement in this stage to determine whether students are building or losing academic momentum.

Points of intervention: academic plan and credit accumulation

Examples of promising practices:

- student enrollment tracking each semester to confirm that students are enrolled in the courses outlined in their academic plans and to provide students with early and appropriate counseling and support
- minimum or default courseload expectations to prioritize progress by ensuring that full-time students earn at least 15 college-level credits and part-time students earn at least nine college-level credits during their first year
- cohort learning opportunities to build student connections and relationships both with one another and with the institution
- joint academic and financial aid counseling to ensure that working students are fully aware of the resources and opportunities available that could enable them to attend full time

Momentum point: transition to work or transfer to four-year college

As students approach completion of their educational programs, research demonstrates the value of providing both recognition and dedicated support to facilitate their transition from the world of study to the world of work, including intensive career counseling and specific labor market attachment practices. For those students transferring to four-year institutions, the goal is to finish strong and launch with momentum into a bachelor-degree program well-prepared and with confidence.

Points of intervention: during programs of study, final term, and post-completion

Examples of promising practices:

- progress check-ins, once students select career goals, to help monitor completion and assess changes in students' goals that may require changes in their academic plans
- world-of-work connections to build opportunities for students to apply what they are learning in the classroom to the workplace through service-learning, job shadowing, mentoring, internships, and apprenticeship programs
- purposeful partnerships to link students with businesses and service providers that specialize in resume preparation, interview skills, and job placement activities
- ready transfer relationships to give students a direct connection to four-year institutions so that students who desire to continue their education have the benefit of an articulation policy or agreement that enables easy and ready launching toward a bachelor's degree
- coherent programs that treat students as complete human beings, that are more than just checklists of courses, and that prepare students to be thoughtful and responsible citizens whatever career or educational direction they take next

Timeline and Learning Objectives

Completion by Design will be implemented over five years in three phases. At each phase, ongoing evaluation will reflect on what has been learned both about the opportunities and challenges associated with implementation of the initiative as it was originally planned (initiative learning) and about the relative success or failure of the strategies employed to improve completion rates for low-income young adults (field learning). Both types of learning may yield lessons that result in course corrections for the initiative over the five years of its implementation.

LAUNCH—SPRING 2011

To help build a sense of common purpose and ambition, the foundation will convene a launch session early in 2011 for the selected sites. The chancellor or chief executive (as applicable) representing each managing partner will be expected to attend this session along with representatives from each cadre college or campus. The launch will provide an opportunity to exchange information and expectations, learn about and contribute to the formulation of the cross-site evaluation, meet with the foundation's postsecondary success team, and hear from the core staff of the Completion by Design Assistance Team (CDAT)--a strategic support group of experts and leaders funded by the foundation for the purpose of advancing this initiative-- about the resources and assistance that will be made available throughout the effort.

PHASE I: PLANNING—12 MONTHS

During this period, each managing partner will convene its cadre campuses and provide financial support to enable release time as appropriate and required. With funding provided by the initiative, each managing partner will hire or designate a high-level staff member to serve as the Completion by Design project director. This individual will serve as the point person on behalf of the managing partner and will be involved in cross-site and cross-state coordination and conversations. The managing partner will convene its cadre campuses at least three times during the planning period, preferably in a retreat-like setting with the time and space necessary for thoughtful planning, reflection, and relationship development. The state policy lead will participate in these sessions, providing guidance and support on matters of state policy and finance.

During this period, CDAT, working with regional and national experts, will coordinate the performance of a pathway/systems analysis and a practice review of each cadre college or campus. The pathway/systems analysis will be based on the loss and momentum point framework. With support provided by CDAT

and access to national experts on issues of postsecondary education and administration, each cadre will use the information and knowledge gained through its campus-based assessments to select a set of proven and promising practices that will constitute its shared model pathway to completion. The model pathway will be subject to review and approval by the foundation before funding is awarded for Phase II implementation/demonstration.

PHASE II: IMPLEMENTATION/ DEMONSTRATION—24 TO 30 MONTHS

Once the Phase II budget and plan are approved, the managing partner campus will receive funds to continue to convene its cadre campuses and the state policy lead as a learning community and to provide campus/college allocations for purposes of implementing the model pathway to completion.

Depending on the unique nature and needs of campuses, the allocations may vary among cadre campuses/colleges. The intent is to implement the entire pathway for a substantial cohort of students on each of the participating campuses and increase the number of participating students steadily until all students are included whom it is practical to include. The precise configuration may vary depending on the demographics and circumstances of each cadre.

Each campus will carefully monitor how and to what extent the pathway is improving rates of retention, academic progress, and credential completion. On a site-by-site basis, CDAT, in consultation with the managing partner and the foundation's evaluation team, will determine baseline and/or comparison groups against which progress will be measured.

The managing partner and its cadre campuses will be expected to participate in cross-state gatherings organized by CDAT on behalf of the foundation as well. The state policy lead, with the support of the managing partner, will be responsible for convening an advisory board of state and field stakeholders

representing education, including K-12, business, and labor as well as nonprofits and philanthropic organizations as appropriate and possible. A strong policy lead and advisory board are essential to cultivating a receptive environment for reform and creating momentum for scale.

PHASE III: SCALING AND ADOPTION—24 MONTHS

Assuming the results of Phase II are positive (evidence of increased rates of success, pace of progress, and credential completion among Completion by Design students), each managing partner will be eligible for an additional two years of foundation funding to implement a scaling strategy that includes an expansion of the model to a larger proportion of students within each participating college/campus, as well as a cross-site adoption that extends the Completion by Design approach to other sites across the region and/or state.

The cadres will use their experience during Phase II to develop proposals (policy, practice, and funding) to help promote the success and mitigate the failures of the effort. The managing partner, working with the state policy lead, will implement a scaling strategy that includes policy reforms as required. During this period, managing partners will convene participating campuses and colleges as necessary. CDAT will convene national gatherings that provide opportunities for states to share lessons learned and promote cross-site adoption of the processes, practices, and policies tested and adopted through Completion by Design.

EVALUATION AND LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Careful evaluation through each phase of the initiative will provide feedback to fine-tune the following phase as well as to increase our overall base of knowledge about what works and what does not in community college reform. A detailed evaluation plan will be negotiated between the foundation and the firm or firms selected to evaluate Completion by Design, but it will likely address most of the learning objectives listed below for each phase.

Learning objectives in Phase I

Evaluation in this phase will concentrate on the extent to which:

- campuses within cadres and among different states are losing students at the same junctures and at the same rates (field learning)
- participating campuses/colleges are already employing proven and promising practices and with what result (initiative and field learning)
- the managing partner is adding value to the community colleges and facilitating connections and communications (initiative learning)

- the inter-disciplinary planning process is producing valued insights and improvements in operational practices in real time (initiative learning)
- each cadre is able to design a coherent model pathway to completion that addresses all dimensions of the student experience (initiative learning)
- issues of policy and funding are emerging as barriers or opportunities in the design process (initiative and field learning)
- the presence/involvement of the state policy lead is helping to identify and mitigate policy and funding challenges (initiative and field learning)
- plans developed are consistent with the intention of the initiative and have realistic timelines associated with them
- CDAT is providing helpful support to colleges

Learning objectives in Phase II

Evaluation in this phase will concentrate on the extent to which:

- the original plan was implemented or modified (initiative learning)
- there is greater communication, coordination, and accountability between the operational functions within each participating campus as a result of the Completion by Design planning process (initiative learning)
- there are institutional, financial, or state policy barriers that challenge implementation (field learning)
- the advisory board is producing consensus on issues of reform (initiative learning)
- there is consensus on issues associated with adoption and implementation of reform (field learning)
- the managing partner is building credibility with its campuses and as a resource beyond the Completion by Design initiative (initiative learning)
- the state policy lead is generating broad-based political and stakeholder interest in Completion by Design (initiative learning)
- the campuses that constitute each cadre are sharing information beyond Completion by Design and applying the information that they share to practice (initiative learning)
- the model pathway to completion is improving outcomes for the students enrolled as compared with similar students who are not enrolled (initiative learning and field learning)
- the implementation/demonstration period has affirmed or challenged the underlying assumptions of Completion by Design
- the initiative needs to be revised as a result of implementation experiences (initiative and field learning)

Learning objectives in Phase III

Evaluation in this phase will focus on the extent to which:

- cadre campuses are able to increase student enrollment in the model pathway to completion (initiative learning)
- institutions are able to achieve efficiencies of scale as they include more students in the pathway and extend the Completion by Design approach to more campuses within the system (initiative learning)
- there is demand among other community colleges within each state to learn more about Completion by Design and adopt its approach (initiative learning)
- the state policy lead is helping to build institutional and statewide support for changes in policies, regulation, and funding that are deemed necessary for success based on the Completion by Design experience (initiative learning)
- the managing partners are successfully replacing foundation funding with other sources of support for their work on postsecondary education and Completion by Design (initiative learning)

Roles of the Participants

MANAGING PARTNER

Each managing partner will have both management and leadership responsibilities. The managing partner will be awarded a grant to support its management and coordination function, funds to cover its own campus costs associated with planning and implementation (e.g., adoption of new practices, programs, and professional development), and resources that can be used to enlist cadre institutions in the fulfillment of designated roles and responsibilities. Exact allocations will depend on, among other factors, the total number of states selected, the total number of participating campuses in the cadre within a given state, and the total number of students reached.

In addition to the grant funds and access to CDAT's team of expert technical assistance providers and consultants, each managing partner will have the benefit of a part-time CDAT consultant as well. The managing partner will have an opportunity to nominate individuals for this position and will be involved in the hiring process.

Key responsibilities of the managing partners include:

- managing cadre planning and implementation
- managing the funds for planning and implementation
- organizing quarterly conversations that include the cadre college delegations and relevant stakeholders to examine lessons learned in the process of planning and implementation (in partnership with CDAT)
- coordinating the data collection required to monitor Completion by Design student progress for cadre campuses/colleges
- enlisting a state policy lead to advise on issues of policy and finance reform and to co-convene an advisory board of statewide leaders representing public, private, and civic institutions critical to the policy and financial future of postsecondary education
- serving as the liaison with the foundation's measurement and learning staff
- developing and implementing a communications plan to share progress and lessons learned in real time with the cadre members and beyond
- developing and implementing a plan to encourage colleague institutions to adopt similar and successful approaches to serving low-income young adults

- providing regular updates to the foundation on progress, challenges, and accomplishments
- identifying challenges and barriers to success and bringing them to the attention of appropriate participants in order to address those challenges
- making best use of technology and of the resources and experiences of other initiatives and investments to advance the Completion by Design goals
- making the changes necessary to embed and sustain the successful practices, policies, and systems that emerge during the Completion by Design process
- serving as the spokesperson for the cadre and participating, as required, in cross-state conversations
- identifying and advocating for funding streams and policy reforms that encourage the successful practices that emerge from Completion by Design
- securing access to the data needed for ongoing evaluation from (or in cooperation with) the state policy lead

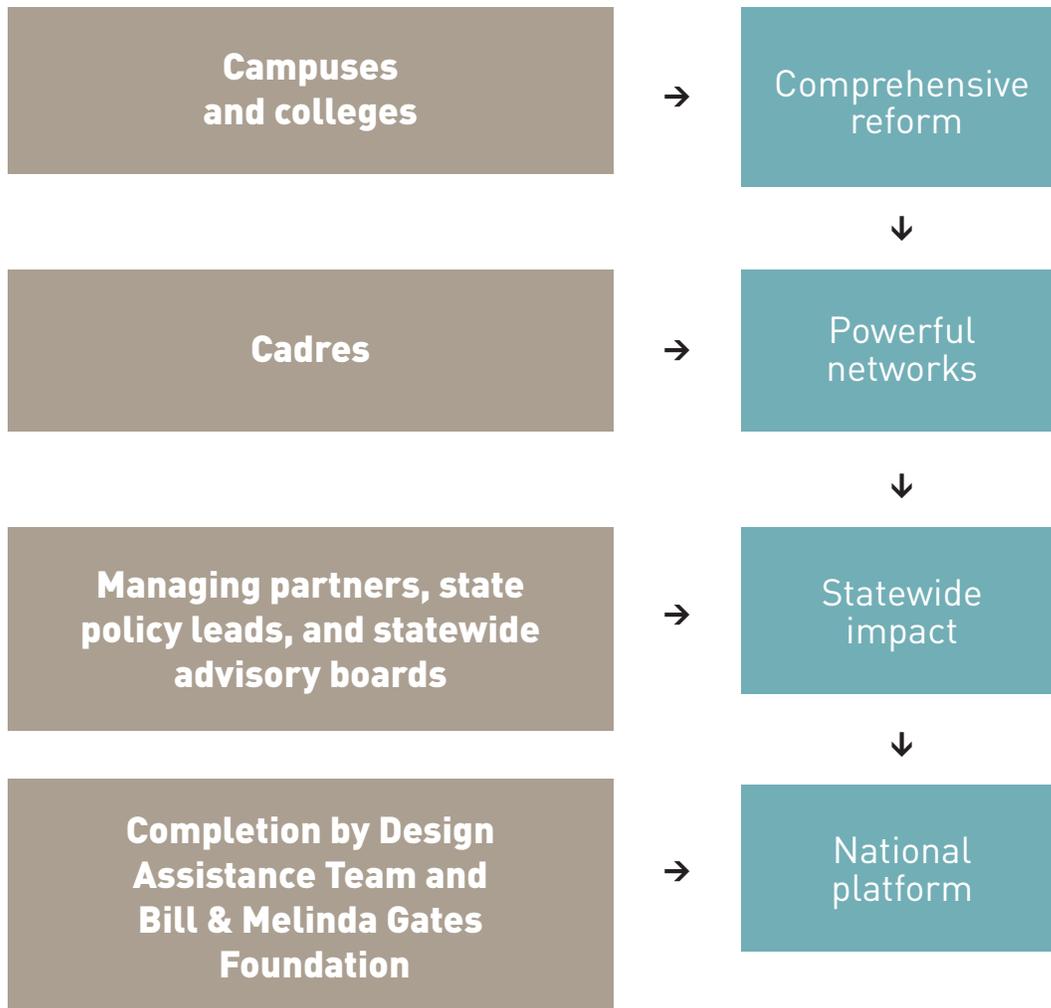
STATE POLICY LEAD

In order to create a receptive policy environment for Completion by Design, the managing partner will enlist an appropriate state agency or organization to serve throughout the initiative as the Completion by Design state policy lead. The state policy lead's responsibilities will include:

- participating in all aspects of planning and implementation with the cadre
- advocating (to the extent of its legal authority) changes to state policy to remove barriers or provide support to implementation of the initiative
- working in conjunction with the managing partner to convene a statewide advisory board inclusive of public, private, and civic institutions
- providing or facilitating access to student data on a statewide basis that will be required as part of the overall Completion by Design evaluation

The state policy lead, with support from the Completion by Design Assistance Team, will also convene and chair a statewide learning community comprised of one representative from each college in the state. The learning community will meet in person twice a year and will be connected online as well. It will be charged with

Completion by Design: Organization for Impact and Scale



- keeping the state's colleges current on Completion by Design activities
- encouraging cross-institutional learning about related activities from represented colleges and from national initiatives
- exploring strategies to get to statewide adoption in Phase III of the project

STATEWIDE ADVISORY BOARD

Identified and recruited by the managing partner and the state policy lead, the statewide advisory board may be an existing public/private organization that formally agrees to accept the additional responsibility, or it may be a new entity created specifically for the purpose of the Completion by Design initiative. The statewide advisory board's key responsibilities will include:

- providing input from the perspective of civic, business, labor, and K-16 education leaders
- serving as a resource for the initiative to build public support for its goals

CADRE CAMPUSES

Each Completion by Design cadre campus will empower an interdisciplinary delegation of at least six faculty and administrators representative of key administrative and programmatic functions to represent the campus within the cadre and to be responsible for implementing the model pathway to completion at the campus level. For example, people with responsibility in the following areas should be well represented and be given the release time and resources to fully engage with the initiative:

- orientation
- enrollment and registration
- assessment
- advising
- developmental education
- curriculum and key programs of study
- transfer agreements
- technology
- institutional research

This approach reflects the Completion by Design value of building relationships that are both personal and functional. People who know one another well will find it more natural to collaborate across organizational boundaries. Personal relationships that develop as a result of participating on the campus delegation will help align the systems and functions for which each delegation member is responsible. The major

responsibilities of each cadre campus and its interdisciplinary delegation will include:

- generating and sharing information and data widely throughout the initiative
- cooperating in the documentation and evaluation process associated with the initiative
- implementing the model pathway to completion as adopted by the cadre
- using data to inform the planning process
- making the adjustments necessary in practice and approach to respond to findings from the analyses
- adopting and tracking the achievement of momentum points for the population reached by the model pathway to completion
- committing to sustain successful practices beyond the term of grant support
- committing to share its experience with other colleges/campuses within the state and beyond

THE CADRE

Collectively, the campus delegations working together, coordinated by the managing partner, are the cadre responsible for engaging in an information-gathering and planning process to design a model pathway to completion at their campuses. Once the model is adopted, the cadre will continue to meet as a learning community during the two-year implementation/demonstration period. To inform the design of the model, each participating campus will work with CDAT to conduct a systems/pathway analysis using the loss and momentum points framework to identify where along the dimensions of a student experience each campus is at greatest risk of losing students and a practice review to document the condition of current practices with respect to current needs and knowledge. These analyses will inform the planning process and help set priorities for the design of the model pathway to completion.

COMPLETION BY DESIGN ASSISTANCE TEAM (CDAT)

One important participant in the implementation of the initiative is being created and financed by the foundation as a resource to successful grantees.

The Completion by Design Assistance Team is a new organization that will include nationally respected experts in educational practice, data analysis and use, leadership, finance, systems change, and policy. It will provide on-site technical assistance and support throughout the initiative's planning, implementation, and scaling process. CDAT is intended to be highly flexible, so that as new issues or needs emerge, it can adapt to meet them. CDAT is responsible for recruiting

and engaging, as required, the individuals and organizations with the skills and experience necessary for the successful implementation of Completion by Design. It will also work to bring experts together to share ideas and experiences and to improve the quality, consistency, and effectiveness of assistance provided to grantees.

Each managing partner will have a dedicated CDAT consultant who will be available to support the planning and implementation process, and will assume leadership in coordinating the consulting needs of participating campuses. These CDAT consultants will devote 40 percent of their time to each grantee to which they are assigned, and the managing partner will have an opportunity to participate in the screening and hiring of candidates. Major responsibilities of CDAT will include:

- developing methods and tools for conducting a systems/pathway analysis that identifies where and to what extent students are being lost
- developing and updating a guide to proven and promising practices covering all dimensions of the community college experience
- performing the pathway analysis for each participating community college/campus to identify loss and momentum points and working with the cadre to synthesize findings in a way that helps set priorities for the design of the model pathway to completion
- developing an appropriate tool for, and then performing a practice review to assess the state of practice within, participating institutions/campuses
- facilitating national gatherings for purposes of cross-state learning and to ensure initiative-wide coherence across all states in terms of approach, intentions, and outcomes
- supporting the cadre in the development and implementation of its model, ensuring that the model addresses the key loss points and that it is respectful of the unique nature and conditions of the member institutions
- supporting managing partners in the fulfillment of their roles and responsibilities

BILL & MELINDA GATES FOUNDATION

The foundation will provide funding and support for the initiative, including consultation on issues of content, communications, documentation, and dissemination. The foundation will be responsible for sharing lessons learned with other philanthropic institutions and for disseminating, as appropriate, the lessons that have implications at a broader, national level. The foundation shares responsibility for the overall successful implementation of the initiative and will be accountable for the following:

- bringing to the attention of CDAT and the managing partners the other elements of the postsecondary success strategy and ensuring that there is strong internal coordination among foundation-funded efforts
- having clear and documented expectations for cadre campuses and grantees
- providing financial support consistent with the scope of the activities expected of grantees
- consulting with grantees to develop process and outcome indicators for a cross-site evaluation and involving grantees in the process of interpreting and attributing results
- taking appropriate corrective action as data and experience require
- sharing lessons learned with colleagues in philanthropy and beyond
- using its voice and influence to achieve initiative intentions

Design and Support Team Members

BILL & MELINDA GATES FOUNDATION

Hilary Pennington

Mark David Milliron

Debbie Greiff

Linda Baer

Kendall Guthrie

Jamie Morris

Sidney Hacker

Carrie Beckner

Anne Person

Brock Grubb

Jill Allison

Stephanie Molta

Dee Johnson

COMPLETION BY DESIGN ASSISTANCE TEAM

Nan Poppe

Leslie Haynes

John Hoops

Cynthia Williams

FACILITATED AND PREPARED BY

Jill Blair

Short List of References and Suggested Reading

- AACC-American Association of Community Colleges. (2010). Fact Sheet. Retrieved from <http://www.aacc.nche.edu/AboutCC/Pages/fastfacts.aspx> in August 2010.
- Adelman, Cliff. (2006). *The Toolbox Revisited: Paths to Degree Completion From High School Through College*. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Education, 2006.
- ATD-Achieving the Dream. (2010). See sections on evaluation case studies and promising practices on the Achieving the Dream website. <http://www.achievingthedream.org>.
- Bailey, Tom. (2009). *Rethinking Developmental Education in Community Colleges*. Community College Research Center Brief #40. Teachers College, Columbia University. Retrieved August 2010 from <http://ccrc.tc.columbia.edu>.
- Completion by Design Assistance Team. (2010). *Guide to Proven and Promising Practices*. Under development.
- Goldrick-Rab, Sara. (2007). *Promoting Academic Momentum at Community Colleges: Challenges and Opportunities*. Community College Research Center Working Paper #5. Teachers College, Columbia University. Retrieved August 2010 from <http://ccrc.tc.columbia.edu>.
- Goldrick-Rab, Sara. (2006). *Following Their Every Move: An Investigation of Social-Class Differences in College Pathways*. *Sociology of Education*, 79 (1), 61-79.
- Prince, David and Davis Jenkins. (2005). *Building Pathways to Success for Low-Skill Adult Students: Lessons for Community College Policy and Practice from a Longitudinal Student Tracking Study*. Washington State Board of Community and Technical Colleges. April 2005.

Supporting Student Success: Preventing Loss, Creating Momentum

A system designed for student completion



Student data systems

(From Day One to completion)

Student engagement

Leadership focused on completion

(faculty, administration, trustees)

www.gatesfoundation.org

Guided by the belief that every life has equal value, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation works to help all people lead healthy, productive lives. In developing countries, it focuses on improving people's health and giving them the chance to lift themselves out of hunger and extreme poverty. In the United States, it seeks to ensure that all people—especially those with the fewest resources—have access to the opportunities they need to succeed in school and life. Based in Seattle, Washington, the foundation is led by CEO Jeff Raikes and Co-chair William H. Gates Sr., under the direction of Bill and Melinda Gates and Warren Buffett.

For additional information on the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, please visit our web site: www.gatesfoundation.org.

© 2010 Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. All Rights Reserved. Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation is a registered trademark in the United States and other countries.
