

## **Groundbreaking Alliance of Public Research Universities to Provide Students with Last-Mile Grants to Support College Completion**

*University Innovation Alliance announces its fourth scale project, designed to ensure students who are eligible for graduation aren't penalized for funds owed*

PORTLAND, Ore. – August 16, 2017 – The University Innovation Alliance (UIA) today announced a new scale initiative designed to ensure that students who face financial challenges at the end of their studies aren't prevented from graduating. The new initiative will provide students at its 11 partner universities with completion grants to alleviate financial pressure in their last semesters. Building on the UIA's model to test and scale innovations proven to improve student success, the public research universities will work together to study the impact of completion grants on student success.

Preliminary data from the UIA shows that as many as 4,000 Pell-eligible seniors who are in good academic standing at its campuses could be at risk of being dropped from classes or not allowed to graduate because less than \$1,000 is owed to the institutions. Through funding from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and Great Lakes Higher Education Corporation & Affiliates, UIA members will provide these completion grants—a type of emergency aid—to some students beginning this fall.

“Some well-intentioned policies or practices can become a barrier to student completion. By first tapping predictive analytics, our institutions have been able to more easily surface and address those barriers,” said Bridget Burns, Executive Director of the UIA. “Providing needed aid to students who are close to graduation is yet another example of how collaboration among our institutions is bringing new solutions to light.”

This scale project is inspired by Georgia State University's Panther Retention Grants program, which has helped more than 8,000 students persist in their college education. This is the fourth national scale project undertaken by the 11 UIA campuses since the UIA launched in 2014. Past projects have included the application of predictive analytics, analytics-informed academic advising, and “university innovation fellows,” all intended to help campuses improve student success.

“Oregon State University has been working hard on a number of fronts to serve lower income students and has benefitted from its work with the UIA. One of the values of the UIA is the ability to test ideas from other institutions in ways that are tailored to local needs,” said Susana Rivera-Mills, Vice Provost and Dean for Undergraduate Studies at Oregon State University. “We welcome this new opportunity to innovate with completion grants and test the means by which they can be best used to address the specific needs of OSU students.”

Georgia State's program was launched in 2011 to support the nearly 1,000 students who withdrew each semester due to outstanding tuition balances of less than \$1,500. The initiative identifies academically qualified students who are at risk of non-enrollment due to nonpayment and provides an average award of \$900 to cover the remaining cost of tuition. Since the program's inception, more than 60 percent of senior Panther Retention Grant recipients have graduated within a year, and more than 75 percent of non-seniors were still enrolled a year later. Georgia State will be providing programmatic support to other UIA member campuses throughout the implementation process.

"Completion grants have been a critical part of our efforts to help students persist and succeed," said Tim Renick, Vice Provost of UIA member Georgia State University. "Last year, more than 1,200 students who graduated from Georgia State were recipients of Panther Grants at some point in their academic careers. We are excited to work with the UIA, and to share best practices and lessons learned with our institutional partners as they implement this transformative initiative."

Like other UIA scale projects, the impact of completion grants will be evaluated externally and lessons learned from the research will be shared with the higher education community. The support of Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and Great Lakes Higher Education Corporation & Affiliates will enable UIA institutions to provide completion grants to students over the next five semesters.

In just three years, the UIA has transformed a theoretical concept for collaboration into a nationally recognized community of practice that is driving institutional transformation—and improved student outcomes—across 11 of the nation's largest public research universities. The UIA is on target to surpass its White House goal to award an additional 68,000 undergraduate degrees over the next decade, and instead expects to award an additional 100,000 degrees over this time frame, with half of these awarded to underrepresented students.

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**About the University Innovation Alliance:** The University Innovation Alliance is a national consortium of eleven large public research universities spanning the geographic, economic and social diversity of our country. Together, we are working to regain America's economic competitive edge by helping more students graduate with a high-quality and affordable education. We do this by broadening participation in higher education and implementing proven programs that significantly improve graduation rates for all students regardless of socioeconomic background. The 11 members of the Alliance include: Arizona State University, Georgia State University, Iowa State University, Michigan State University, Oregon State University, Purdue University, The Ohio State University, University of California, Riverside, University of Central Florida, University of Kansas, and The University of Texas at Austin. For more information, visit [www.theUIA.org](http://www.theUIA.org).

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