REL Appalachia Ask A REL Response

College and Career Readiness, Postsecondary
October 2018

Question:

What strategies have state policymakers and other state agency staff implemented to improve college access and success?

Response:

Thank you for your request to our REL Reference Desk regarding evidence-based information about the strategies that policymakers and other state agency staff can implement to improve college access and success. Ask A REL is a collaborative reference desk service provided by the 10 Regional Educational Laboratories (RELs) that, by design, functions much in the same way as a technical reference library. Ask A REL provides references, referrals, and brief responses in the form of citations in response to questions about available education research.

Following an established REL Appalachia research protocol, we searched for peer-reviewed articles and other research reports on state strategies for improving college access and success. We focused on identifying resources that specifically addressed the implementation of such strategies. The sources included ERIC and other federally funded databases and organizations, research institutions, academic research databases, and general Internet search engines. For more details, please see the methods section at the end of this document.

The research team did not evaluate the quality of the resources provided in this response; we offer them only for your reference. Also, the search included the most commonly used research databases and search engines to produce the references presented here, but the references are not necessarily comprehensive, and other relevant references and resources may exist. References are listed in alphabetical order, not necessarily in order of relevance.

References

Erisman, W., & Del Rios, M. (2008). *Creating change one step at a time: Efforts to improve college access and success in Indiana.* Washington, DC: Institute for Higher Education Policy. Retrieved from http://www.ihep.org/research/publications/creating-change-one-step-time-efforts-improve-college-access-and-success-0

From the executive summary: "Over the past several decades, Indiana's policymakers, business leaders, and education officials have sought solutions to some of the major

educational issues affecting the state, including instituting a more rigorous high school curriculum, expanding opportunities for need-based financial aid, creating a statewide community college system, and improving postsecondary completion rates. These efforts have already begun to make an impact on the state's college access issues (Thomson, 2006). In 2006, more than two-thirds (68 percent) of Hoosier students completed a college preparatory curriculum in high school, compared with only 12 percent in 1994. In 1992, Indiana ranked 34th in the nation in the percentage of high school graduates who enrolled the following fall in postsecondary education. By 2004, its ranking had risen to 10th in the nation (Indiana Commission for Higher Education [ICHE] 2008a). Since 2001, more than 65,000 additional students have enrolled in college in the state, in part because of increased access made possible by the new community college system (ICHE 2008b). The process Indiana has undertaken is evolutionary and offers a glimpse into how a state has been able to engineer policy and convene various interest groups for a common purpose: improving the postsecondary access and attainment of its residents. While policymakers in other states may not find all of Indiana's best practices relevant to their situations, Indiana is a remarkable example of how priorities can be shifted and consensus reached to increase educational opportunities for state residents."

National College Access Network. (n.d.) *NCAN state policy toolkit*. Washington, DC: Author. Retrieved from http://www.collegeaccess.org/images/documents/StatePolicyToolkit.pdf

From the introduction: "The State Policy Toolkit reflects NCAN's Model State Policy Agenda, which aims to provide NCAN members and partners, particularly those in networks or coalitions, with a guide to develop their own state policy goals and agenda. Moreover, the toolkit provides examples of effective policies and programs to help organizations develop and guide their state policy advocacy strategy. Each installment topic is derived from NCAN's model agenda and is categorized under affordability or talent development. Subcategories for affordability include *need-based aid* and *funding strategies.* Beneath talent development are *preparation, access,* and *success.*"

Nunez, A., & Oliva, M. (2009). Organizational collaboration to promote college access: A P–20 Framework. *Journal of Hispanic Higher Education*, *8*(4), 322–339. Abstract retrieved from https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ858190; full text available at https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Anne_Marie_Nunez/publication/249631121_Organizational_Collaboration_to_Promote_College_Access_A_P–20_Framework/links/5605756808aeb5718ff16e7c/Organizational–Collaboration–to–Promote–College–Access–A–P–20–Framework.pdf

From the abstract: "P–20 collaboration between the P–12 and higher education sectors has been increasing in recent years as a strategy to promote college access, particularly among underrepresented students. This article provides an overview of the current state of P–20 scholarship and practice in the field, offers an approach to conceptualizing the study and practice of P–20 collaboration, suggests strategies for refining research and practice in the field, and offers directions for future inquiry."

Perna, L. W., Rowan-Kenyon, H., Bell, A., Thomas, S. L., & Li, C. (2008). A typology of federal and state programs designed to promote college enrollment. *Journal of Higher Education*, *79*(3), 243–267. Abstract retrieved from https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ791867; full text available at https://repository.upenn.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1158&context=gse_pubs

From the abstract: "Over the past four decades, policymakers have developed numerous policies and programs with the goal of increasing college enrollment. Despite the apparent plentitude of policies and programs, however, college access and choice for recent high school graduates remain stratified by socioeconomic status and race/ethnicity. By characterizing the ways that particular programs are intended to encourage enrollment, a typology provides a necessary first step in an empirical examination of the ways that programs separately and together shape higher education opportunity for different groups of students. As a way to inform policy, practice, and research relating to college enrollment, this study develops a typology of college-enrollment programs to sort out the tangled web of governmental efforts in this area. The authors focus on government-sponsored programs that are designed to encourage college-going behavior and to reduce enrollment gaps among racial-ethnic and socioeconomic groups. Developed from an examination of federal and state programs in five states, the typology categorizes the approaches that policymakers are using to promote college enrollment. The typology also offers guidance for subsequent analyses that examine the ways in which policies and programs at multiple levels separately and together promote college enrollment for different groups of students. Through the development and application of this typology, the authors conclude that Hearn's (2001) observations about federal student aid policies and programs are generalizable to state enrollment programs. This article offers a framework for bringing order to the complexity of the college-enrollment policy domain."

Pitre, P. E. (2011). P–20 education policy: School to college transition policy in Washington State. *Education Policy Analysis Archives, 19*(5), 1–15. Retrieved from https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ931642

From the abstract: "This study examines Washington State's attempt to move toward an integrated, P–20 system of education that enhances student transitions from high school to college. In analyzing Washington as a single case study, a profile of the state is developed on key access related characteristics. Data for this study were gathered utilizing fundamental case study methods. In-depth qualitative interviews were conducted with Washington state legislators, legislative staff, key state education agency officials, and college and university representatives. Document analyses of agency records, public hearings, testimonies, position papers, reports, and public meeting records were also conducted. This study found that Washington has many key programs in place to enhance student transitions between the K–12 system and higher education, but the state's current approach lacks coherence and cohesion. This study also found that the state has developed a new and innovative model with the potential to solve many transition related issues, but it will require assessment to determine its actual effectiveness."

Additional Organizations to Consult

College & Career Readiness & Success Center: https://ccrscenter.org/

From the website: "The College and Career Readiness and Success Center (CCRS Center) is dedicated to ensuring all students graduate high school ready for college and career success. The mission of the CCRS Center is to serve Regional Comprehensive Centers in building the capacity of states to effectively implement initiatives for college and career readiness and success. Through technical assistance delivery and supporting resources, the CCRS Center provides customized support that facilitates the continuous design, implementation, and improvement of college and career readiness priorities."

National College Access Network: http://www.collegeaccess.org/

From the website: "Our mission is to build, strengthen, and empower communities committed to college access and success so that all students, especially those underrepresented in postsecondary education, can achieve their educational dreams through a two- or four-year degree or high-quality certificate program…NCAN provides member organizations with professional development, networking, benchmarking, tools, and news from the field so they can deliver college access and success services more effectively and to more students. NCAN also advocates at the national level for policies to improve access and success for all students."

Methods

Keywords and Search Strings

The following keywords and search strings were used to search the reference databases and other sources:

- state AND (capacity OR agency OR policy) AND (college OR postsecondary) AND (access OR enroll* OR persist* OR graduat*)

Databases and Resources

We searched ERIC, a free online library of more than 1.6 million citations of education research sponsored by the Institute of Education Sciences (IES), for relevant resources. Additionally, we

searched the academic database ProQuest, Google Scholar, and the commercial search engine Google.

Reference Search and Selection Criteria

In reviewing resources, Reference Desk researchers consider—among other things—these four factors:

- Date of the publication: Searches cover information available within the last 10 years, except in the case of nationally known seminal resources.
- Reference sources: IES, nationally funded, and certain other vetted sources known for strict attention to research protocols receive highest priority. Applicable resources must be publicly available online and in English.
- Methodology: The following methodological priorities/considerations guide the review and selection of the references: (a) study types—randomized controlled trials, quasi experiments, surveys, descriptive data analyses, literature reviews, policy briefs, etc., generally in this order; (b) target population, samples (representativeness of the target population, sample size, volunteered or randomly selected), study duration, etc.; (c) limitations, generalizability of the findings and conclusions, etc.
- Existing knowledge base: Vetted resources (e.g., peer-reviewed research journals) are the primary focus, but the research base is occasionally slim or nonexistent. In those cases, the best resources available may include, for example, reports, white papers, guides, reviews in non-peer-reviewed journals, newspaper articles, interviews with content specialists, and organization websites.

Resources included in this document were last accessed on September 26, 2018. URLs, descriptions, and content included here were current at that time.