Preparation of Palm Beach County Students

Our community faces challenges with college access. Of the most recent graduating high school class from the School District of Palm Beach County, fewer than 70 percent enrolled in college the fall after graduation. For students from low-income families, fewer than 60 percent enrolled.

Those who do enroll in college face challenges with successful completion. Of the graduating class of 2010, only two-thirds of those who started college received an Associate’s or Bachelor’s degree within six years. Only 53 percent of the low-income students who enrolled in college in 2010 received a degree within six years.

Our Approach

In May of 2015, a broad group of community leaders came together to discuss this issue. A working group was formed to create a strategic plan that would serve as a blueprint for the Partnership moving forward, focused on improving college access and completion for Palm Beach County.

**OUR VISION** is that every Palm Beach County high school graduate completes a post-secondary credential within six years of high school graduation that prepares them for a meaningful career with a sustainable wage.

**OUR MISSION** is to collectively ensure an integrated and effective system of supports from middle school through post-secondary that empowers students for career success.

In designing and implementing this work, the Partnership is committed to the following **GUIDING PRINCIPLES**:

- The term "college completion" includes any form of post-secondary credential. This encompasses Bachelor’s and Associate’s degrees as well as professional certificates.
- The voices of students and parents are essential in designing approaches to increase access and completion.
- The initiative must intentionally consider all types of students and be inclusive of the many diverse communities within Palm Beach County.
- The route to and through college may be different for each student, requiring individualized options and supports that meet students’ unique needs and interests.
- Collective impact provides a framework for collaboration, alignment and synergy that will most efficiently maximize community efforts to improve college access and completion outcomes.

Our Work

In order to understand how best to improve college access and completion, the Partnership commissioned a research study of the needs of Palm Beach County students. This study included review of performance data for Palm Beach County, a scan of current programs and services, and in-depth stakeholder conversations with the following groups:

- students in high school and in college,
- advisors to high school and college students,
- parents,
- community leaders,
- and providers of college access and completion support.

Based upon this research and effective practices in other communities, we determined the most promising areas to address first through our strategic plan.
Your Role

Over 40 government, nonprofit and corporate partners have been actively involved in this strategic planning effort and are committed to supporting its implementation. Your organization can also join this collective impact approach to improve college access and completion for Palm Beach County students. Please consider one or more of the following opportunities:

• Provide a financial contribution to support the work
• Join a Strategy Team to design and guide the community approach within one of the four areas of focus
• Join a Support Team to assist with communication, data or outreach
• Be an advocate for the effort by creating an opportunity for the initiative leadership to present to a civic, professional or community group.

For more information, visit achievepbc.org or email info@achievepbc.org