Connect students to the supports they need to
complete their college education

JOEY IS IN HIS SECOND YEAR AT A TWO-YEAR COMMUNITY COLLEGE AND WANTS TO TRANSFER TO A LARGER, FOUR-YEAR UNIVERSITY.

He lives off campus, works a part-time job, and relies on financial aid to pay for his education. He has access to information that **allows him to explore the four-year colleges in his area where his credits will transfer, the requirements to transfer into them, the career outcomes of students in his desired field at those schools, his financial aid eligibility, and other supports that would be available to him** so that he can complete his degree while working. After applying to these four-year colleges, he selects one that is a good fit for him because he knows that college has a program of study related to his desired career, knows all of his credits will transfer, and is confident that he'll be able to continue his education the following semester.

Everyone should have the information they need to make informed decisions about their own education and workforce pathways, support individuals navigating these pathways, and create policies that might help others navigate smoother pathways.

Right now, Joey and those supporting him don't have access to the information necessary to make this vision a reality. When states change their data systems to enable access, individuals will be able to use data to make decisions about their pathways through college and into careers.

WHAT DOES ACCESS LOOK LIKE IN ACTION?

Robust state data systems that prioritize meaningful access to data will meet current and future information needs in the following ways.

STUDENTS have access to data that helps them:

TRANSFER seamlessly between public two- and four-year colleges.

UNDERSTAND their options by:

- Mapping college courses based on their future goals and workforce entry requirements for different fields.
- Exploring two- and four-year colleges and the options for transferring between them.
- Assessing the return on investment for various education and career preparation options and their related employment outcomes.
- Exploring available, in-demand careers and understanding the skills and credentials required for those jobs (including life skills such as interviewing and resume building).

GET support by:

- Locating campus and community support services.
- Determining their eligibility and applying for any financial aid, emergency aid, or public benefits programs that might be available to help support them without navigating different agencies and sites.
- Receiving personalized nudges to stay on track with courses, ensure that deadlines are met, guide them through the job application process, or alert them when requirements have not been met.

PLAN for their futures by:

- Understanding the skills obtained through their coursework, including any high school career and technical education (CTE) or dual enrollment courses, and whether those skills have applicability in the job market.
- Identifying high-quality, in-demand career options that align with their interests, skills, and experience.
- Creating records containing their education, skills, credentials, and competencies and being able to match that record with employers and job openings (e.g., a credential wallet enabled by a learning and employment record).
- Understanding the impact of decisions about subsequent educational enrollment and job acceptance on continued eligibility for any public benefits programs in which they are currently enrolled (e.g., Temporary Assistance for Needy Families [TANF]).

INDIVIDUAL ACCESS CHECKLIST

States must provide access to data that is:

- ✔ Specific to the individual's role and the questions that they are trying to answer;
- ✔ Timely;
- ✔ Able to be manipulated and help them take action;
- ✔ Translated into languages other than English;
- ✔ Secure; and
- ✔ Longitudinal.

ADVISORS AND MENTORS (college-based counselors) have access to data that helps them:

- **ADVISE** students on how to progress their course taking within the current education setting and beyond based on what the student already did (e.g., CTE and dual enrollment in high school) and on their career interests (e.g., further study at a four-year university, apprenticeships).

- **HELP** students understand the requirements and employment outcomes of different career pathways, such as which pathways may include apprenticeship opportunities and which may (or may not) lead to opportunities in the future.

- **AID** students working to identify, assess their eligibility for, and enroll in any public benefits programs (e.g., nutrition, health care, housing) that might be available to them or their families and could help support them.

- **GUIDE** students working to identify, assess their eligibility for, and enroll in any financial aid programs that can help subsidize the cost of their education and community programs that can assist them with the additional considerations that may affect their ability to attend college (e.g., materials, distance to program and transportation limitations, need for emergency financial assistance).

COLLEGE-BASED CAREER SERVICES STAFF have access to data that helps them:

- **HELP** students identify, understand the costs and benefits associated with, and apply for work-related opportunities, like internships, externships, career-connected part-time jobs, or apprenticeships, that leverage their experience and prepare them for their career goals.

- **IDENTIFY** and intervene with students who may be off track with respect to the requirements they must meet for their career goals.

Tools and information are available to other **individuals and organizations that offer support** to students attending two- and four-year institutions of higher education, including but not limited to:

- Students' families;
- External mentors and advisors who support students in a particular institution;
- Disability services staff;
- Social workers;
- Rehabilitative services organizations;
- Community organizations; and
- Regional student aid coordinating institutions.

THE PUBLIC

(individuals, advocates, and community organizations) has access to data that helps them:

- **ANSWER** questions about two- and four-year program enrollment, total cost of attendance, tuition, net price, loans, grants and scholarships, default rates, transfer rates, graduation rates, popular majors and the job openings associated with them in the state, employment and earnings, CTE graduation rates by CTE status, and two- or four-year degree or workforce training program enrollment for CTE graduates.

- **UNDERSTAND** how to navigate the pathways between two- and four-year colleges, including understanding program availability, quality, costs, outcomes, and returns on investment.

- **ADVOCATE** for easier transfer options and smoother transitions between two- and four-year institutions to make completing a college education simpler for students.

- **EVALUATE** whether students' outcomes are equitable across different two- and four-year colleges.

- **ANSWER** questions such as whether changes to and investments in K–12, admissions, and developmental education policies and approaches are resulting in increased college success for students, including whether enrollment, persistence, and completion rates differ among groups of college students.

- **EFFECT** change by examining the outcomes for their community and advocating for increased access to counselors, advisors, financial aid, and benefits designed to support students in K–12 and in two- and four-year colleges.

PUBLIC ACCESS CHECKLIST

States must provide access to open data, aggregate data, and dashboards that:

- ✔ Are easy to understand and navigate;
- ✔ Are available in languages other than English;

- ✔ Are disaggregated by different groups of students and by program/school;
- ✔ Are dynamic and able to be queried and customized; and

- ✔ Include best practice indicators, such as those in the Education-to-Workforce Indicator Framework.

POLICYMAKERS (state legislators, agency heads, and college and workforce development leaders) have access to data that helps them:

PLAN, allocate resources, and answer questions, such as:

- Which students are at the greatest risk of dropping out, and what resources or supports could help them?

- What resources or supports are most effective at helping a struggling student to stay in school and complete their program of study?

- What is the impact of student experiences, including native language, scheduling, employment, transportation patterns, access to health care and stable housing, and food security, on a student's likelihood of completing a two- or four-year degree program?

- Do different populations of students (particularly those who are historically underserved) attend institutions they are likely to complete, and how does that completion or lack of completion affect their long-term economic mobility?

- Which populations of students are prepared for success in college, and which are struggling? What different admissions, remediation/developmental education, scheduling and registration, and other policies might better support students who are struggling?

- What K–12 policies (e.g., dual enrollment, CTE, courses of study, youth apprenticeships) correlate to increased persistence, retention, and completion in postsecondary?

- Which campuses and programs have the best completion outcomes, what approaches lead to those higher completion rates, and what is the return on investment for students?

- How many and which groups of students successfully complete a program at a two-year school, transfer, and then successfully complete a program at a four-year college?

- What pathways from high school through two- and four-year colleges, including gap years, service opportunities, work-based learning, or other programs, are associated with positive postsecondary completion and workforce outcomes?

- What types of state investments in support programs are associated with increased enrollment in and completion of two- and four-year degree programs?

- How do available, quality degrees and credentials map to in-demand careers and labor market needs that lead to high-quality careers?

POLICYMAKER ACCESS CHECKLIST

States must provide access to data that:

- ✔ Can be viewed statewide and tailored to answer policymakers' specific questions;

- ✔ Enables policy creation, evaluation, and adjustments as needed; and

- ✔ Enables effective management of programs.

WHAT WILL REALIZING THIS VISION MAKE POSSIBLE?

Access to data helps people make decisions and improves state and local investments in education and workforce pathways.

When state leaders give people tailored, individual access to the data they need, they also support the success of policies and programs like these:

- Programs of study and stackable credentials aligned to employment needs;
- Easier transfer between and among public institutions of higher education;
- Quality CTE programming;
- Support for historically underserved and vulnerable populations;

- Education and training opportunities aligned with employment needs;
- Easier access to financial aid, public benefits, and other supports that may help students stay in school; and
- Evidence-based comprehensive approaches to student success scaled across postsecondary institutions.

STATES GETTING STARTED

This work is ambitious. While some states and districts have created resources that allow individuals, the public, and system leaders to use data to make decisions about **pathways through college and into the workforce,** leaders must go farther to give people the kind of data access they need. Examples of how states have gotten started include the following:

- WorkSource Washington maps degrees and credentials to relevant workforce skills.

- City University of New York's Accelerated Study in Associate Programs (ASAP) uses data to help students arrange their schedules, access outside services, and secure transportation so they can complete on time.