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American Talent Initiative Grows to 86 Schools and Nationally Recognized Colleges Share Commitments to Educate More High-Achieving, Low-and Moderate-Income Students

Yale University, Wake Forest University, University of Texas at Austin are among the first schools to announce public commitments through Bloomberg Philanthropies' American Talent Initiative (ATI)

Started in December 2016, ATI has grown from 30 to 86 institutions working to attract, enroll, and graduate high achieving, low- and moderate-income college students

NEW YORK, NY – Today, the [American Talent Initiative \(ATI\)](#), a Bloomberg Philanthropies initiative led by the Aspen Institute's College Excellence Program and Ithaca S+R, announced that its membership has grown from 30 to 86 top colleges and universities since it launched in December 2016. ATI's mission is to enroll 50,000 additional talented, low- and moderate-income students at colleges and universities with strong graduation rates by 2025. In addition, ATI shared six member institutions' ambitious new plans to attract, enroll, and support more high-achieving, lower-income students.

Yale University, Wake Forest University, the University of Texas at Austin, University of Washington, Georgia Institute of Technology, and Elizabethtown College released specific action plans to support these students socially, academically, and financially, from before they arrive on campus to graduation and beyond. Over 85 percent of institutions that joined ATI earlier this year have drafted plans, while members that joined more recently are on-track to propose their plans in the coming months.

“America is the world's greatest meritocracy, but too often a parent's income still determines a child's likelihood of attending a great college,” **said Michael R. Bloomberg, founder of Bloomberg Philanthropies and three-term Mayor of New York City.** “The American Talent Initiative is aimed at fixing that, and the program's momentum is building: More top schools are committing to enrolling more talented students from lower-income families and drawing up concrete action plans to make that happen. Their leadership sets a great example for others.”

“I am delighted that Yale is participating in the American Talent Initiative’s national movement to increase the number of low-income students at top schools by 2025,” **said Peter Salovey, President of Yale University.** “We are deeply committed to increasing the number of talented first-generation and low-income students enrolled in Yale College. With the opening of two new residential colleges, Yale is increasing overall undergraduate enrollment by 200 students per class year. Yale is also refining our outreach and financial aid strategies; we have already increased the number of undergraduates in the entering class who are first-generation college students by 62 percent in the past five years. In that same period, the number of incoming students receiving Pell grants has grown by 61 percent. Yale is committed to continuing these efforts and its support for financial aid policies that make a Yale education affordable for everyone. All students and universities stand to benefit from the American Talent Initiative, and Yale is proud to be an ATI partner.”

As part of a national effort to increase opportunity for an additional 50,000 talented, low- and moderate-income students at top-performing colleges and universities by 2025, Yale University has committed to enrolling 225 more students who receive Pell grants, in addition to 150 more first-generation college students. Wake Forest will increase the share of Pell recipients enrolled by more than 40 percent and increase the share of students who receive need-based aid by 25 percent.

The University of Texas at Austin is aiming for a four-year graduation rate of 70 percent by building on its recent efforts to boost student success on campus. These efforts have already resulted in an increase in the four-year graduation rate from 52 percent to 66 percent with the greatest progress among Pell-eligible, first-generation and under-represented students.

Public Commitments from ATI Member Institutions	
Wake Forest University	Yale University
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase applications from Pell-eligible students by 50% • Increase the share of Pell recipients enrolled by > 40% • Increase the share of student who receive need-based aid by 25%. • Increase the mean graduation rate for Pell recipients by 12.5% 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase the number of first-generation students enrolled by 150 • Increase the number of Pell recipients enrolled by 225
University of Texas at Austin	University of Washington
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase the four-year graduation rate to 70% from 52% in five years. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Graduate an additional 125 low-and middle-income students per cohort by 2025
Elizabethtown College	Georgia Institute of Technology
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase the number of transfer students by 400% from 25 in 2017 to 100 annually by 2021 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase the amount of need-based aid distributed by 30%

These six institutions aim to improve socioeconomic diversity through a number of strategies expected to drive enrollment among high-achieving, lower income students, including:

- Identifying talented students through better recruitment of qualified high school graduates and high-achieving transfer students from community colleges and other schools
- Reaching out directly to the neediest families nationwide to increase the number of Pell-eligible students enrolled, the number of applications from Pell-eligible students, and the number of first-generation students enrolled
- Removing cost as a barrier to access by increasing need-based aid to make attendance more affordable
- Retaining and graduating lower-income students at rates comparable to their higher-income peers

ATI, which has grown its membership from 30 to 86 colleges and universities in under a year, works with institutions across the country that graduate at least 70 percent of their students in six years. At this time, approximately 290 colleges and universities nationwide achieve that graduation rate, and the initiative is working to increase the total number of low- and moderate-income students enrolled at these institutions by 50,000 - from about 480,000 to 530,000 students - by 2025.

As part of its commitment, each member institution works with ATI to develop action plans to recruit more students from economically diverse backgrounds, ensures that admitted lower-income students enroll and engage in campus life, prioritizes need-based financial aid, and works to minimize gaps in progression and graduation rates between students of differing socioeconomic backgrounds.

ATI is a companion effort to the Bloomberg Philanthropies' CollegePoint initiative. Together, ATI and CollegePoint are working to address a persistent problem in college access and completion: each year, for a variety of reasons—including lack of information about their options, confusion about costs, and inadequate financial aid offers—tens of thousands of hard-working, highly talented students fail to enroll in our country's leading institutions. CollegePoint helps those students navigate the college admissions process and connects them with the institutions where they are most likely to succeed. At the same time, ATI works across institutions to ensure that campuses can enroll and support lower-income students through to graduation.

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About Bloomberg Philanthropies:

Bloomberg Philanthropies works in more than 120 countries around the world to ensure better, longer lives for the greatest number of people. The organization focuses on five key areas for creating lasting change: Arts, Education, Environment, Government Innovation and Public Health. Bloomberg Philanthropies encompasses all of Michael R. Bloomberg's charitable activities, including his foundation and his personal giving. In 2015, Bloomberg Philanthropies distributed over half a billion dollars. For more information, please visit bloomberg.org or follow us on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), [Snapchat](#), and Twitter [@BloombergDotOrg](#).

About The Aspen Institute's College Excellence Program:

The Aspen Institute's College Excellence Program (www.aspeninstitute.org/college-excellence) aims to advance higher education practices, policies, and leadership that significantly improve student outcomes. The Program is part of The Aspen Institute www.aspeninstitute.org, which has a mission of fostering leadership based on enduring values and providing a nonpartisan venue for dealing with critical issues.

About Ithaka S+R:

Ithaka S+R (www.sr.ithaka.org) is a not-for-profit service that provides research and strategic guidance to help the academic and cultural communities serve the public good and navigate economic, technological, and demographic change. Ithaka S+R is part of ITHAKA (www.ithaka.org).