



What is ATI? Fact Sheet

February 2020

ABOUT THE AMERICAN TALENT INITIATIVE

The American Talent Initiative (ATI) is a long-term alliance between the nation's top colleges and universities and the philanthropy and research communities, designed to substantially expand access and opportunity for talented low-and middle-income students. ATI was founded in December 2016 with one central, ambitious goal: **by the year 2025, to attract, enroll, and graduate 50,000 additional high-achieving, lower-income students at the nation's colleges and universities with the highest graduation rates.**

WHO ARE WE?

ATI is a Bloomberg Philanthropies-supported collaboration between the [Aspen Institute College Excellence Program](#), [Ithaca S+R](#), and a growing alliance of top colleges and universities. Our members are diverse in terms of size and sector. Follow the link to view an up-to-date [member list](#).

HOW DO WE ACCOMPLISH OUR GOALS?

ATI's theory of change focuses on three major areas of activity:

- **Committing to Visible Goals:** To contribute to the shared goal of an additional 50,000 lower-income students, members commit to stepping up their own efforts to recruit, support, enroll lower-income students, ensure that they thrive on campus, graduate, and are positioned to succeed after college. Members set institution-specific goals to contribute to ATI's shared goal.
- **Facilitating Research and Knowledge-Sharing:** To inform our collective actions and activities, members share what they learn about making progress toward this goal with one another and with the broader higher education community and the public. Members participate in ATI communities of practice, which convene smaller groups of interested members around specific topics—the first two communities focus on enrolling veterans and enrolling community college transfer students. Members also report data on the enrollment and success of lower-income students, so that ATI can measure its aggregate progress on an annual basis.
- **A Sustained National Campaign:** To amplify the impact of our individual and collective actions, ATI members contribute to a national communications campaign that unites leaders around the importance of socioeconomic diversity on college campuses and motivates those in and beyond the membership to act on this important issue.

WHO IS ELIGIBLE TO JOIN ATI?



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- As of November 2019, there were 327 colleges and universities in the United States that meet the ATI eligibility criteria described below.
- Each year, ATI staff use data on colleges and universities' six-year graduation rates from the National Center for Education Statistics to determine the list of institutions that are eligible to participate in ATI. Institutions must:
 - Enroll at least 500 undergraduate students
 - Achieve a six-year graduation rate of 70 percent or higher for at least three of the last five years

HOW DOES ATI DEFINE "LOW- AND-MIDDLE INCOME"?

- A student is considered "lower-income" or "low- or middle-income" if they come from the bottom half of the national income distribution. As a proxy, we measure Pell student enrollment—the number of students who receive Pell Grants, a federal need-based grant that is typically awarded to students who come from the bottom 40 percent of the income distribution.

HOW DOES ATI MEASURE PROGRESS TOWARD THE 50,000-BY-2025 GOAL?

- ATI's 50,000-by-2025 goal applies to all 327 member and non-member institutions that meet the high-graduation-rate threshold.
- Publicly available data on Pell student enrollment is used to measure progress across all high-graduation-rate four-year colleges and universities between academic years 2015-16 and 2025-26.
- Every year, ATI also collects enrollment, retention, and graduation data from member institutions, which allows the initiative to preview trends in lower-income student enrollment and success on a faster schedule than permitted by the publicly available data.

HOW FAR HAS ATI PROGRESSED TOWARD THE GOAL?

- Since ATI's founding, membership has grown from 30 to 128 institutions.
- Between 2015-16 and 2017-18, the 327 ATI-eligible institutions added 20,696 Pell students, indicating that ATI is more than 40 percent of the way to its 50,000-by-2025 goal in just two years.
- During that same time period, the 128 ATI members contributed disproportionately to that progress, adding 12,837 Pell students.
- More recent data from 120 ATI members suggests that aggregate progress has leveled off. Between 2017-18 and 2018-19, these members added eight Pell students.