

Overview of the Promising Practice Accelerator

To help advance the goals of its *Accelerating Opportunity* campaign, the American Talent Initiative launched the *Promising Practice Accelerator* in January 2022, awarding \$25,000 grants to ATI members to pilot or catalyze promising programs that increase access and success. **Eight ATI members** have received the first round of grants, focusing on community college transfer, academic equity, and student success. With this \$200,000 investment, ATI aims to support hundreds of lower-income students across these institutions over the next four years and help institutions nationwide adopt promising interventions.

Below, we have outlined overviews of each of the winning proposals in this first round of the Promising Practice Accelerator. ATI will document the impact of these interventions over the spring and share key insights in Fall 2022. If you have any questions about this initiative or any of the individual proposals, please email Ben Fresquez at Benjamin.Fresquez@aspeninstitute.org.

Spring 2022 Accelerator Projects:



Institution: Barnard College (New York, NY)
Project: Expanding the Footprint of a Low-Income and First-Generation Student Resource Hub
Focus: First-Generation Students

Barnard College will expand the reach of [Access Barnard](#), a center established in 2020 to help address the unexpected costs and needs among low-income and first-generation students. Accessed by nearly 35% of the student body, Barnard sees the opportunity to expand available instructional materials and technology for hybrid learning, textbook access codes and graduate prep resources. To complement these resources, Barnard will also launch 5-7 Navigating Barnard workshops, which will provide training on specific challenges such as impostor syndrome, communicating with faculty, and isolation and stress—and serve as a critical access point for additional support services across campus.



Institution: Hope College (Holland, MI)
Project: Propelling the Vision of Hope Forward
Focus: Student Success

Hope College will advance its fully funded tuition-free vision for [Hope Forward](#), launching and scaling several initiatives to ensure the success of an increasingly diverse student body. Hope will launch a \$10,000 Benevolence Fund to address crises that stand in the way of student success and also extend the reach of its [Spring Opportunity for Academic Recovery \(SOAR\) program](#) to 10-15 additional students (for a total of 55 students). Hope will also be able to fund the professional development of its SOAR advisors, building institutional capacity to respond to the needs of first-generation students and elevate inclusive teaching strategies for the field.



Institution: Lebanon Valley College (Annville, PA)
Project: A Comprehensive, Cohort-Based Approach to Student Success
Focus: Student Success

Lebanon Valley College (LVC) will pilot a four-year cohort-based program, starting with 20 entering first-year students in Fall 2022. Those students will access ongoing community-building activities to foster inclusion and belonging, support from academic coaches and peer mentors, and professional networking and on-campus employment opportunities. Through this comprehensive approach, LVC aims to narrow equity gaps in academic achievement, retention, and completion. LVC has already committed funds to support four additional cohorts of 20 students through graduation, using this pilot year to hone the model.



Institution: Stevens Institute of Technology (Hoboken, NJ)
Project: Assessing ADAPT's Promise to Bridge Retention Gaps in STEM
Focus: Assessment

Stevens Institute of Technology will expand its assessment of [ADAPT](#), a new National Science Foundation-funded initiative providing comprehensive financial scholarship and mentorship to support the development of "adaptive expertise" within a cohort of 50 high-achieving, low-income STEM undergraduates over four years. Stevens will be able to launch a complementary study to the NSF project, benchmarking the adaptiveness scores in our current low-income STEM undergraduate students. Stevens will use insights from these research activities to maximize the impact of the model, train STEM faculty in academic equity, and structure a digital repository with program materials for other institutions seeking to increase retention of STEM students with demonstrated financial need.



Institution: Stony Brook University (Stony Brook, NY)
Project: Laying the Groundwork for Equitable Teaching Communities
Focus: Equity in the Academic Experience

Stony Brook University will expand its Faculty Fellowship program, supporting three additional faculty fellows across disciplines to increase retention rates among first-year, full-time students from underserved backgrounds. Building on research that illustrates the influence of meaningful faculty engagement, new faculty fellows will design, implement, and measure the outcomes of meaningful learning experiences. Stony Brook will be able to extend the reach of the program to 80 students this spring and use the insights from this expansion to inform equitable professional development for all faculty. Over time, Stony Brook hopes to use this initiative as a foundation for shaping teacher communities that center academic equity.



University
of Dayton

Institution: University of Dayton (Dayton, OH)

Project: Demonstrating the Promise of Transfer Academies

Focus: Community College Transfer

The University of Dayton will broaden success coaching personnel and resources to fuel its “[transfer academy model](#),” supporting the growth of its transfer partnership with Sinclair Community College and expansion to Columbus State Community College. Dayton will now serve 200 high-achieving transfer students from Sinclair and Columbus State this spring, ensuring they have the dedicated mentorship and academic, social, and financial resources they need to persist and graduate. Dayton will use the additional investments in student success to demonstrate the scalability of a transfer academy model that could serve 500 students each year—and share promising practices that institutions nationwide can use to replicate this model.



THE UNIVERSITY OF
TENNESSEE
KNOXVILLE

Institution: University of Tennessee, Knoxville (Knoxville, TN)

Project: Fall Institute to Increase Persistence

Focus: Academic Readiness/Transition

The University of Tennessee, Knoxville will launch a **Fall Kick-Off Institute**, a two-day pre-orientation program aiming to offset the stark drop-off in retention rates among 1,400 incoming Pell-eligible students with a high school GPA in the 3.0-3.5 range. During the Institute, students will participate in strengths-based workshops on academic skills, financial management, faculty engagement, and mental wellness. UT envisions this institute can help participants acclimate to campus, connect to resources, and build relationships with students, faculty and staff. Students will also participate in a first-year seminar as a cohort and receive academic coaching. As a result, UT aims to increase retention from 68.1% to 75% for this subgroup.



Institution: Wofford College (Spartanburg, SC)

Project: Introducing a Targeted, Direct-to-Student Retention Award

Focus: Retention

Wofford College will pilot a **targeted, \$1,000 end-of-semester retention award**, focused on 50 students with satisfactory academic progress and demonstrated financial need. Wofford has piloted this direct award to offset gaps in financial aid that contribute to a higher risk of attrition. Wofford also seeks to incentivize students’ academic success, which can help reinforce their feelings of belonging on campus. As long as they remain in academic good standing, eligible students will continue to receive these enhancements each semester as part of their financial aid award through graduation. If successful, other institutions can use this low-cost, scalable blueprint to increase affordability and retention.