

Overview:

Later this month, ATI will release its fourth annual reporting of progress, building on the launch of its *Accelerating Opportunity* campaign in June 2021. The campaign marked a bold, collective effort among ATI institutions to reverse the significant declines in lower-income enrollment during the pandemic. The data shared this summer does **not** reflect the commitments that members made and our light-touch approach to reporting progress reflects that institutions' efforts are still underway. We anticipate that next year's data may begin to reflect members' commitments to their aspirational goals. To frame your institution's efforts in light of this reporting to individuals across campus, media, and/or other key external stakeholders, we have prepared content below that includes:

1. **Talking Points for ATI Members**
2. **Responses to Key Questions**

If you have any questions about this document or would like to discuss it in greater detail, please contact Adam Rabinowitz at Adam.Rabinowitz@aspeninstitute.org.

Talking Points for ATI Members:

General Messaging:

- One year ago, we at [institution] re-affirmed our commitment to the American Talent Initiative along with over 120 other high-graduation-rate institutions, setting aspirational goals to increase lower-income student enrollment by 2025.
- We know that when students enroll in [institution], they increase their chances to graduate, get good jobs, and experience upward economic mobility. That's why institutions like ours must strive to ensure greater access and success for lower-income students, especially in the current economic climate.
- One year after launching the *Accelerating Opportunity* campaign, overall declines in Pell enrollment are stabilizing, propelled by a six percent jump in first-time, full-time enrollment. However, we face overall declines in community college transfer and continuing/returning enrollment.
- While ATI members have enrolled 7,713 more Pell students since 2015-16, members still have a lot of ground to cover as they aim to realize the 50,000-by-2025 goal.
- Overall Pell enrollment data largely does not reflect the commitments members made during this campaign. However, we are confident that the strategies we put into place have put us on the right path and we hope to see gains as early as next year.
 - As an initiative, we plan to focus on presidential leadership, especially regarding financial aid, community college transfer, and student success for lower-income students.

Detailed Messaging About the Initiative's Collective Progress:

- While declines in Pell enrollment across the membership have stabilized in the year since the launch of the *Accelerating Opportunity* campaign, ATI has not yet reversed its downward trend.
 - Like much of the field, members continue to grapple with drops in transfer student enrollment (six percent) and continuing/returning student enrollment (1.3 percent).
- We can turn the tide and show progress as early as next fall as members make good on their goals.
 - The impact of initiatives and programs that members put into place following the *Accelerating Opportunity* campaign are not reflected in this year's data.
- We are seeing early signs of this progress already.
 - 64 ATI members added Pell students over the past two years, even during the worst of the pandemic.

- 69 members added Pell students in the past year, representing more than half of the institutions participating in ATI.
- Since ATI started in 2015, nearly two-thirds of members have added Pell students, including 63 private members.
- Even as public members experienced setbacks in enrollment, most maintain high Pell shares and have room to grow their Pell enrollment in the years to come.
- Members continue to drive a disproportionate share of the progress since the launch of ATI and are graduating students at high rates.
- ATI institutions are not starting from square one in their effort to galvanize progress.
 - They are already expanding the pipeline, increasing first-time, full-time enrollment by six percent in the past year alone.
 - They can build on those gains with additional investments in community college transfers, adult learners, and student veterans.

Responses to Key Questions:

1. What was the *Accelerating Opportunity* campaign?

[Institution] joined the 125 members in the American Talent Initiative in Summer 2021 to reverse collective declines in lower-income student enrollment. As a part of this campaign, we reaffirmed our commitment to the initiative's 50,000-by-2025 goal and pledged to an aspirational, lower-income student enrollment goal based on our 2019-20 pre-pandemic enrollment. We have set specific strategies to realize this goal and aim to see the early impact of our work reflected in next year's data.

2. Will ATI still meet the 50k goal by 2025?

The ATI goal is still within reach as members make progress toward their aspirational goals and see the impact of their commitments reflected in next year's data. We are optimistic that we can build on the gains in lower-income student enrollment that 69 institutions made in just the past year.

3. Why didn't ATI make more progress this past year?

Even though ATI members made commitments through the *Accelerating Opportunity* campaign last year to aspirational Pell enrollment goals, the impact of those commitments is not yet reflected in the data. We hope to see gains as early as next year, as the programs and investments other members and we launched begin to take hold. Also, the initiative experienced drops in transfer and continuing/returning student enrollment, mirroring the trends seen at other institutions across the country. Over the past two years, 1.4 million students have left higher education. ATI's strategy for the next year focuses on supporting members in bringing those students back to campus and expanding their recruitment and outreach, enabling them to make good on their commitments.

4. Why did the effort stall, even before COVID?

There is no single story across the membership:

- At a high level, these trends may have resulted from a combination of insufficient progress among institutions with very low lower-income student enrollment shares and declines among high-performing institutions with very high Pell shares.
- The data shows that 83 ATI members made gains in this pre-pandemic period, enrolling an additional 19,122 lower-income students between 2015 and 2019. ATI continues to double down on those efforts, by accelerating gains at some institutions while supporting others in maintaining the access they have long provided [if applicable, discuss challenges your institution encountered].

5. How do you think ATI can make progress next year?

- ATI members are already showing progress is possible based on the past year alone. More than half of ATI institutions (69) increased their Pell enrollment from Fall 2020-2021—and 64 were able to make progress even during the worst of the pandemic.
- ATI presidents have also begun to make transformative investments in financial aid, outreach, retention, community college transfer and postgraduate success since the pandemic. We know from our research and data that these are the right places to focus attention. With presidents making these initiatives a priority, we hope they will bear fruit in the coming years.

6. What is your plan to realize the aspirational goal you and your institution set through this campaign?

Along with the other ATI members, our plan is to make progress over the short and long-term. This will look different on each member campus. At [institution], we are: [insert institution-specific strategies/practices.]¹

[Institutional Examples]

- University of Dayton: It commits to increase the representation of Pell-eligible students in its first-year, first-time cohort to at least 20% by Fall 2025 and Pell-eligible students overall to 19% by that time. To realize those goals, Dayton is expanding its network of high school, community-based, community college, and veteran-based partnerships. Additionally, Dayton will continue to invest in the growth of signature initiatives like the Flyer Promise Scholars program and University of Dayton Sinclair Academy.
- The College of William & Mary: W&M is striving to increase in-state Pell enrollment 20% by 2025, with the continued aim of meeting full need for all in-state students even as enrollment grows. To achieve this goal, W&M will implement enhanced, in-state financial aid packaging models that focus on grants over loans, and improve clarity about affordability for Pell-eligible students. Additionally, they'll build on the success of a recent fundraising campaign to drive total scholarship gifts to \$375 million by 2025.
- Lehigh University: Lehigh has set clear goals to broaden access, increasing its Pell share to 20 percent by expanding partnerships with community-based organizations and committing to double community college transfer enrollment. Beyond access, Lehigh aims to reduce equity-based gaps for students across their higher education experience, including their sense of belonging, graduation rates, and postgraduate education and employment rates. To bridge these disparities, Lehigh is working to reduce barriers to high-impact, experiential learning and research opportunities and connect students to scholarly awards.

7. How are you sharing/measuring progress toward your ATI goals?

Our institution aims to demonstrate progress toward these goals through leading indicators such as the number and share of entering, first-time lower-income students, lower-income community college transfer students, and continuing students (to name a few). We will share progress as the data reflects the commitments we made following the *Accelerating Opportunity* campaign [insert specific metrics if applicable, here.]

8. [If applicable/your institution is still navigating declines] What is holding your institution back from supporting students from lower-income backgrounds? How are you going to reverse the tide?

Our students, members of our campus community, and surrounding region are still grappling with the devastating economic impacts of the pandemic. ATI goals remain a priority and we are using the aspirational commitment we made during the *Accelerating Opportunity* campaign to inform our supports for students from lower-income backgrounds. We're committed to making progress by:²

- [Insert institution-specific recommitment plan].
- [Insert how your institution is measuring success].

¹You can use the strategic priorities template shared upon your institution's recommitment to ATI to insert this information. If you have questions about this document or need another copy, please email Emily Schwartz at Emily.Schwartz@ithaka.org.

²You can draw on your strategic priorities template here as well.

9. [If applicable/your institution has made gains] What are members doing that is successful or sets them apart from their peers, particularly those that made gains during the pandemic?

We are one of 69 schools that made gains during the pandemic years. This achievement is a testament to our students' drive, the tireless efforts of our faculty and staff, and our commitment to ATI goals. We have learned so much over the last two years about the needs of our students and how to support them. We'll use that knowledge to:

- [Insert institution-specific recommitment plan].
- [Insert how your institution is measuring success].

10. Do ATI members also focus on racial equity? Why just focus on socioeconomic diversity?

Both are important goals. We know that advancing socioeconomic diversity is necessary to support progress toward racial equity, and vice versa, especially given students from lower-income backgrounds tend to come from communities of color. As we set strategic priorities to realize our commitment through the *Accelerating Opportunity* campaign, we intentionally considered how they related to our work to support students from communities of color. [Institution] will explore actions and partnerships, as a part of and beyond our commitment to ATI, to advance racial equity by:

- [insert specific steps/strategies if applicable]