



UNITED WAY CHAMPIONS
Local solutions. Lasting impact.

BRIDGE TO FINISH

Your Investment at Work: Helping Low-income College Students Succeed

Because of your financial commitment to college students struggling to stay in school, the program is off to a strong start. In 2019 alone, **5,347 students** received support with **17,875 services**.

COVID-19 UPDATE: SUPPORTING STUDENTS DURING THE PANDEMIC

In the early stages of the coronavirus outbreak, all of our partner schools switched to online learning—and our services followed suit. Students had the ability to make online appointments with Bridge to Finish coaches. Rental assistance was an immediate need, but we were also seeing requests for connecting to food resources, tax filing and applying for unemployment and food stamps (SNAP). The AmeriCorps team continues to be aggressive with phone banks, reaching out to students who have already been helped by the program to spread the word to their peers.

EARLY RESULTS ARE IN

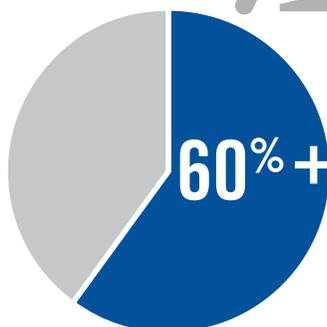
Thanks to our partnership with the State Board for Community & Technical Colleges, we know that in summer and fall quarters of last year:

Students who accessed Bridge to Finish services last year persisted at a **higher rate** than other students



9% increase in overall persistence rates

12% increase in persistence rates for students of color



of students who accessed Bridge to Finish services were students of color



On average, students accessed **three services** through Bridge to Finish.

WHAT'S NEW

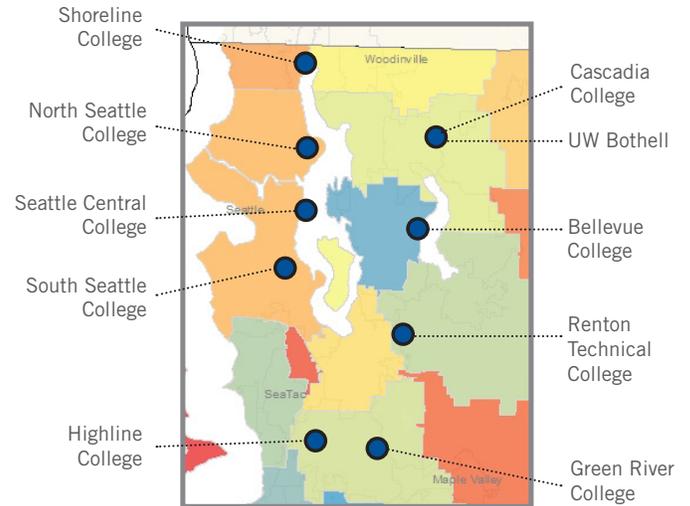
Expansion. Renton Technical College was added to the mix this month. With their Advanced Manufacturing program and Culinary Arts program, it's a great addition for students being served by Bridge to Finish.

Piloting technology to provide consistent access.

Given that colleges are working with students so differently, we will partner with Bellevue College next year to test the impact of user-friendly technology. Edquity for College is an app that helps students manage their money and connect with services. We look forward to seeing what we can learn.

Incorporating mental health support.

We know that navigating college when you're in poverty is tough—and undoubtedly has mental health implications for some students. United Way has received a pilot grant to test strategies to meet the mental health needs of students. The grant includes training the entire team on trauma-informed practices and a needs analysis for how colleges support students.



RACIAL EQUITY MATTERS

It's widely acknowledged that education is the best way to break the cycle of poverty. Yet, living in poverty makes being in college tough. At community college—where more than half of students are low-income and 47% are students of color—it can be especially challenging to stay in school.

On average, white students earn a college-level credential at a rate about 20 percentage points higher than Hispanic and black students do. Students of color experience systemic challenges. The makeup of teachers is less diverse than the student body—so role models are limited. We know that when teachers have shared experience and backgrounds with their students, completion rates are higher.

This program works hard to invest in students of color; the on-the-ground AmeriCorps team reflects the diversity of the student body and the team speaks roughly ten languages.



“They give you the strength to go back to class. Now I have hope.”

Paula was homeless for two years before she started at Highline College. Even though she has three part-time jobs, her hours vary, so she often doesn't have enough income.

While she received some financial help from Bridge to Finish to pay for her rent, that's not all that is keeping her afloat. Before she went to see the financial coaches, she says she was “broken,” but the staff there were ready to listen and assist her with multiple resources.

Paula is planning to major in human services, so she can give back to the community. After she gets her degree, she hopes to go back to work at Highline because she loves the diversity.