

COLLEGE COMPLETION AMIDST AN ECONOMIC CRISIS

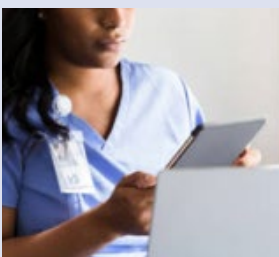
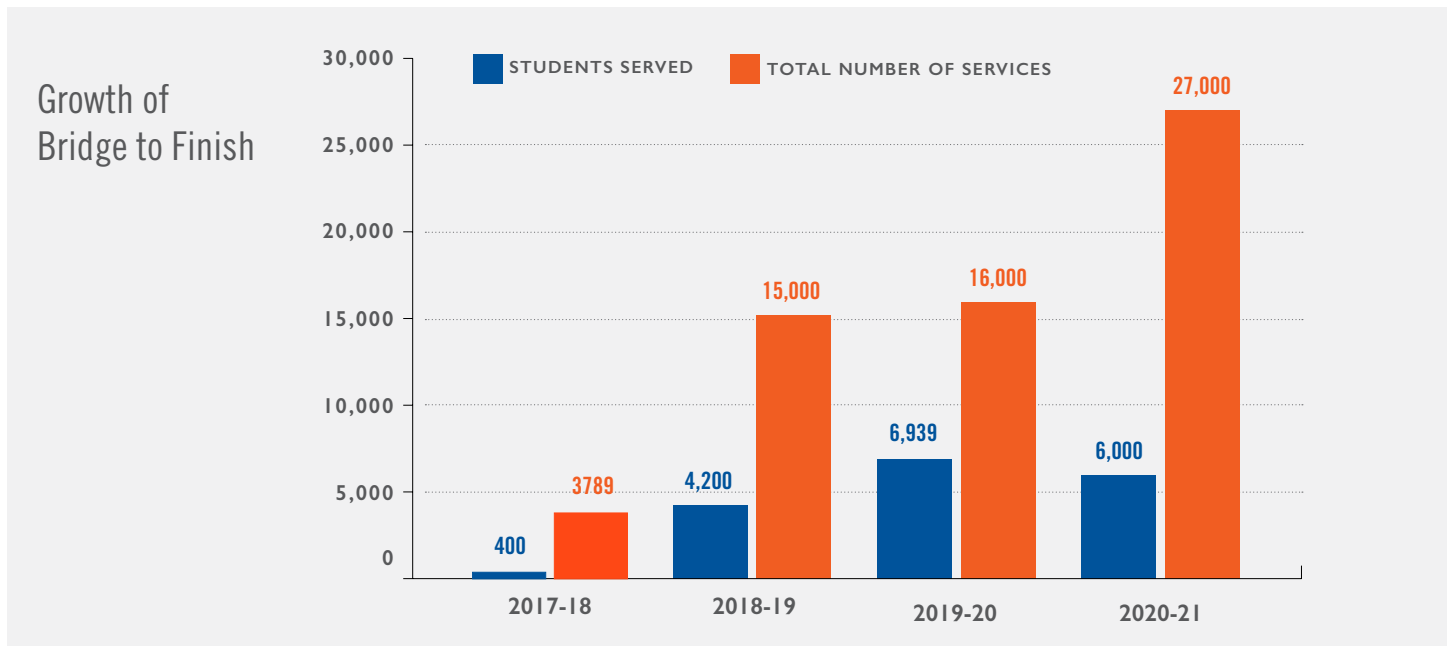
We knew before this economic crisis that poverty makes staying in school tough. Layer on a pandemic and its financial impact—and finishing college for working parents and low-income students can seem out of reach.

And yet, we know that education is the best way to break the cycle of poverty. For five years now, we’ve been on college campuses because of the need. Even before COVID-19, food and housing insecurity were impacting as many as half of all community college students—and was often the reason they were not completing their degree or credential.

Being on the ground, building infrastructure and ongoing donor support has allowed us to help thousands of college students persist in their education.

SERVING MORE STUDENTS

Bridge to Finish is designed to provide services to meet the needs of BIPOC, first generation and parenting students from low-income families. We started on four campuses, meeting students primarily with food and tax assistance—and have grown the program to 10 campuses serving nearly 6,000 students.



Aanya* was studying to be a dental hygienist at Seattle Central College and fell behind on rent during the pandemic. She knew how difficult living in her car would make staying up on her schooling. Aanya worked with the on-campus team to receive an emergency grant and was able to maintain housing. She’s since transferred to the University of Washington’s dental hygiene program and is looking forward to starting a new career soon.

*Student’s name has been changed to protect privacy.

EMERGING NEEDS

- 48% of students being served report housing insecurity
- More parent-students are seeking help. The pandemic impacted students who are parents especially hard; the percentage of parents seeking help climbed from 24% to 42%
- Many students are unsure where their next meal will come from and we're also seeing an uptick in requests for mental health services

RESULTS


- Nearly 6,000 students received 27,000 supports in the 2020-21 school year, allowing them to continue their education
- More than \$1 million in emergency grants provided to meet student needs
- We've leveraged existing programs to help students stay in school:
 - More than 600 students received rental assistance
 - Students received hot meal delivery during finals week thanks to our partnership with DoorDash
- Easy online and mobile application for emergency grants with Edquity app in use on most campuses

SYSTEMS CHANGE

Our approach continues to be twofold: addressing both the current needs of students today and working toward policy change to create more universally equitable college completion tomorrow. By pairing a policy agenda with our coordinated, onsite delivery of services, workshops and coaching, Bridge to Finish is working to ensure that, regardless of where someone might go to school, services are consistent and pathways are solidified that support student success across the region.

Recent systems change work includes:

- Developed a statewide vision and action agenda with Washington Student Achievement Council addressing:
 - Mental and behavioral health
 - Food & housing insecurity
 - Child care
 - Building a coalition to turn the broad support for the agenda into policy
- Ongoing advocacy to extend SNAP benefits to students even beyond the CARES Act
- Adoption of a shared application process that is more accessible and equitable to students, called Edquity



Bridge to Finish is getting national attention from the likes of The Hope Center for performance results and America's Service Commissions for program execution. The Bridge to Finish concept is being adopted across the country to help more students. We're sharing what's worked, what hasn't so that others can expedite the rollout. We like to think of it as "Bridge to Finish in a box."



We value all of our college partners, but **Green River** and **Highline colleges** stand apart with this support:

- Bridge to Finish services are promoted in class syllabi
- More than one on-campus champion at the mid-administration level or higher to support the United Way team
- Willingness to trust the student in reported need and share the benefits with their peers

WHAT THE DATA TELLS US

Many college students are homeless and hungry. One out of five community college students in Washington state report being homeless in the last year and 51% report not knowing where their next meal will come from.¹ Making ends meet is a constant tension: 71% of students who drop out of community college do it to earn money.

- **20% are parents.**² Community colleges enroll the largest share of student-parents. Studies show that the added demands of parenting take a toll: only 27% of single-parent students attain a degree or certificate within 6 years, compared with 56% of dependent students.
- **43% are people of color.**³ 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. Students of color report feeling less academically prepared than their white peers.
- **Many are the first in their family to attend college.** Research shows significant differences in completion between students whose parents have graduated college vs. whose parents who have not. Navigating the financial aid system, pressure to contribute to family expenses, and not having support and encouragement to persist are some of the challenges.

HIGHER EDUCATION = HIGHER EARNINGS

It is widely acknowledged that education is the pathway out of poverty. The latest Bureau of Labor Statistics report⁴ (2019) show that for workers age 25 and over who have less education than a high school diploma had the highest unemployment rate (5.4 percent) and lowest median weekly earnings (\$592) among those at all education levels. Workers with graduate degrees had the lowest unemployment rates and highest earnings.

TYPE OF DEGREES BEING PURSUED	MEDIAN WAGES IN WA STATE
Auto body technician.....	\$27K
Aviation maintenance	\$45.7K
Carpenter	\$35.2K
Dental hygienist.....	\$92.3K
Machinist trainee.....	\$27.2K
Software engineer	\$110.5K

¹ Washington State Community and Technical Colleges #RealCollege Survey, The Hope Center, Temple University.

² Seattle Colleges Fact Sheet

³ Seattle Colleges Fact Sheet

⁴ US Bureau of Labor Statistics, [Learn More](#), [Earn More](#), May 2020.

ONE-STOP COORDINATED RESOURCES

Our team is on 10 campuses providing students a robust offering:

One-time emergency grants. We saw needs skyrocket during the pandemic; nearly half of students (48%) report being housing insecure. Trusting student self-reporting and moving quickly has allowed us to help students remain housed and respond to one-time emergencies, like a broken down car.

Relatable staff. The program is delivered by a combination of paid staff and AmeriCorps members that reflects the diversity of the student body. The team works with college administrators so that the work is woven throughout the student experience. They also participate in a variety of student groups so that there is peer-to-peer promotion.

Variety of services, with financial tools as a foundation. Pre-pandemic, the food pantry may be what drew students in—or the financial workshops. Remote learning required us to promote our services differently and provide more immediate assistance. For example, we’ve been working to raise awareness around the SNAP program (formerly food stamps)—now available to more college students.

YOU + UNITED WAY = BASIC NEEDS ARE NOT A BARRIER TO COMPLETION

With your support, we can create a level playing field for college students. Choosing between child care, rent—or education—will no longer be an issue. With donor support, we can serve more students each year.

We are in our final year of a \$15 million campaign. Your support will allow us to continue to build partnerships with colleges, increase the number of emergency grants made to students so that they can persist—and focus on meeting the housing, food and financial needs of students of color, first generation students and working parents. Your dollars allow us to leverage the power of on the ground, full-time National Service members through AmeriCorps to promote and deliver the program in a way that has already proven successful. Bridge to Finish is a signature anti-poverty strategy in our community and we hope you’ll join us.

\$15M raised = **6,000+** students served each year, **10+** schools

COST AREA	FY 19	FY 20	FY 21	FY 22	FY 23	TOTAL
Service Providers: Legal, Financial Emp., Housing, Child Care, Food	\$85,000	\$380,000	\$425,000	\$375,000	\$375,000	\$1,640,000
Emergency Grants, Homeless Prevention & Other Assistance	\$730,000	\$1,325,000	\$1,800,000	\$1,850,000	\$1,550,000	\$7,305,000
Outreach	\$10,000	\$55,000	\$65,000	\$55,000	\$45,000	\$230,000
Staff Coaches and Campus Coordinators	\$265,000	\$770,500	\$1,106,500	\$1,141,500	\$718,150	\$4,001,150
Supplies	\$10,000	\$30,000	\$35,000	\$35,000	\$30,000	\$140,000
Trainings/Mileage/Orca	\$32,000	\$33,500	\$33,850	\$34,235	\$34,659	\$168,244
Evaluation	\$0	\$50,000	\$75,000	\$75,000	\$75,000	\$275,000
Contingency Planning	\$0	\$10,000	\$20,000	\$10,000	\$10,000	\$50,000
Program Administration	\$113,200	\$265,350	\$361,035	\$357,574	\$283,781	\$1,380,939
PROJECTED TOTAL	\$1,245,200	\$2,918,850	\$3,971,385	\$3,933,309	\$3,121,589	\$15,190,333

PARTNER COLLEGES

Bellevue College
 Cascadia College
 Green River College
 Highline College
 North Seattle College
 Seattle Central College
 (limited services)
 Shoreline College
 South Seattle College
 UW Bothell
 Renton Technical College

“People genuinely do care and United Way has exemplified that tenfold. Seriously, without the assistance, I doubt very much that I would still be in college.”

—Highline College student who received emergency funds for transportation and move-in costs