

Our Model State Policy Agenda aims to provide NCAN members and partners, particularly those in networks or coalitions, with a guide to develop their own policy goals. Moreover, NCAN is developing a state policy toolkit to expand on our ideas and illustrate examples of effective policies and programs to help organizations implement their state policy advocacy strategy. The toolkit will be released in five installments: need-based aid, funding strategies, preparation, access, and success.

NCAN Model State Policy Agenda

States should provide robust, comprehensive higher education funding and financial aid that expands college access for students, particularly those historically underrepresented in higher education, by making it more affordable to attend and graduate. Further, states should review their systems so that students have every opportunity to be prepared, access higher education, progress through their studies and graduate.

Affordability

States should aim to provide an affordable higher education for their residents, especially those who are low-income. NCAN recommends that the cost of attendance at a public, four-year institution should not exceed the combined amount of a maximum Pell Grant, Stafford loan, and state grant aid for students with an expected family contribution of \$0.

Focus on Need-Based Aid. Given that low-income students, students of color, and students who are first in their family are least likely to go to college, states should set the expectation and provide the opportunity for all students to continue their education after high school. States should:

1. Establish a minimum threshold for need-based state aid and not dip below it.
2. Design state aid programs that align with the economic needs of the state, encouraging students to pursue opportunities that align college and career.
3. Use early awareness strategies to set expectations and provide financial resources.
 - a. e.g.: early commitment scholarships, place-based promise scholarships, awareness campaigns, and children's savings accounts or college savings accounts that are tailored to low-income families

Establish a State Higher Education Funding Strategy. State funding for higher education is still recovering from cuts made during the Great Recession. States should develop a predictable, transparent higher education appropriations process. States should:

1. Set a state attainment goal for the population that includes both traditional and nontraditional students and align that goal with state workforce needs.
2. Prioritize efforts to assist underrepresented students in overcoming barriers to accessing and completing postsecondary education (e.g., public-private partnerships, student supports, and bridge programs).
3. Set student-friendly financial aid deadlines and procedures, and devise institutional incentives to increase degree attainment for adults lacking a few credits.
4. Develop a tuition-setting policy that is affordable and predictable, includes passing a state budget without undue delay, and announces tuition increases on a timeline that allows institutions and students to respond.
5. Consider an incentive system for institutions that rewards student success.

- a. i.e., a system that uses transparent performance data to encourage positive student outcomes and is crafted in a manner that does not discourage enrollment of students facing the greatest challenges to achieving postsecondary success

Talent Development

Beyond financing higher education, states and statewide higher education systems should provide opportunities for all students to prepare for and succeed in higher education, particularly those who are traditionally underserved. This includes breaking down barriers within the system and building up students through equitable opportunity.

Preparation. Students do not enter higher education from a vacuum; they need support and opportunities. States should:

1. Ensure all students have access to rigorous, credit-bearing coursework (dual/concurrent enrollment, AP, or IB) in high school.
2. Provide free PSAT/SAT/ACT during the school day to all students.
3. Provide school counselors with relevant, ongoing professional development in college and career readiness.
 - a. Integrate college and career readiness into graduate school counselor programs.

Access. Applying to college is a daunting process, but states can alleviate burden by providing students with the information they need. States should:

1. Allow all high school graduates of that state to qualify for in-state tuition at public colleges.
2. Build a statewide longitudinal data system that links postsecondary outcomes to K-12 education, including college-going and graduation rates by high school.
 - a. Consider using the National Student Clearinghouse to report on all students, not just those attending in-state institutions.
3. Establish state application deadlines and processes that are sensitive to the needs of first-generation and low-income students.
4. Align high school graduation requirements to college acceptance requirements.

Success. States should support students to and through the higher education experience. States should:

1. Provide multiple pathways to success including two- and four-year degrees, certificates, and apprenticeships.
2. Create and then manage a clear and accessible public database of transfer pathways among public institutions.
 - a. Establish pathway programs to guide students from two-year colleges through to four-year degrees.