

EDVANCE

FOUNDATION

Strengthening the Pathway to Higher Education



College Access Is a National Imperative



If it is true that access and equity is a goal embraced by most colleges and universities in the country, then a partnership with — perhaps even a reliance on — community colleges and the transfer pathway will be essential.

*Improving Student Transfer from Community Colleges to Four-Year Institutions —
The Perspective of Leaders from Baccalaureate-Granting Institutions*
College Board, July 2011

OVERVIEW

Once first in the world, the United States now ranks 12th among 36 developed nations in the percentage of the population with a college degree.¹ Projections indicate that by 2018, as many as 60 million Americans will lack the skills and credentials to join the knowledge economy.² Recognizing that this shortage of college-educated workers takes a huge toll on U.S. competitiveness in the global economy, President Barack Obama has called for 8 million more college graduates by 2020.³

Meanwhile, the pool of applicants to four-year colleges and universities in America continues to shrink, largely because of rising tuition costs. The cost barrier, combined with shifting demographic trends, has increased the attractiveness of community colleges – two-year public and private institutions – for students wishing to continue their education beyond high school. Enrollment at these schools as of 2009 numbered 13 million, representing 44 percent of all U.S. undergraduate students.⁴

As enrollment at two-year colleges is on the rise – and even becoming over-subscribed – there is a pool of talent from these institutions yet to be fully utilized. The vast majority of community college students enter with the intention of transferring to a four-year school.⁵ Despite that intention, just 29 percent ultimately transfer – and only 16 percent of students who began their education at two-year colleges go on to earn a bachelor's degree or higher. Compare that 16 percent with the average 60 percent graduation rate among students who originally matriculate at four-year



institutions and one can see how the American dream of advancement through higher education remains elusive for many.⁶

One bright spot, however, is that students who manage to transfer from community colleges to selective four-year institutions obtain their bachelor's degrees at significantly higher rates. In fact, 75 percent of community college transfers

at selective four-year institutions complete their degrees within 8.5 years, and research suggests that number increases to 80 or 90 percent for students who transfer to the most highly selective institutions.⁷ These completion rates are impressive, but they are based on a relatively small number of students who make the leap from community colleges to elite institutes of higher learning. Increasing this pool represents an exciting untapped opportunity – an opportunity to transform tens of thousands of lives, create more diverse, vibrant learning communities, and build the highly skilled talent pool America needs to compete in the 21st century.



By 2020, the goal of the Nextepation Network is to enable at least 50,000 students annually to transition successfully from two- to four-year institutions.

— Dr. Brian C. Mitchell, Director of the Edvance Foundation

INTRODUCTION TO THE EDVANCE FOUNDATION

The Edvance Foundation aims to increase opportunities for college-bound students and support institutions of higher education in improving the quality, accessibility, delivery, and sustainability of their academic offerings. Underlying these goals is an unwavering belief in the power of education to transform lives and fuel economic development – both in the United States and abroad.

The Edvance Foundation provides vision and expertise plus practical, hands-on solutions to the challenges facing higher education. These challenges include the need to ensure a robust pool of future college and university leaders; to build more effective collaboration among institutions and across sectors; to prepare students and adapt systems and offerings to an increasingly globalized world; and to develop new pedagogies and program delivery methods in the face of fast-changing technologies.

Our work focuses on three key areas:

- 1. Partnerships:** We foster collaboration between public and private institutions of higher education, strengthen institutional ties to regional economies, and create efficiencies that support strategic objectives.
- 2. Programs:** We create innovative, scalable, and sustainable programs that strengthen and support institutions of higher education and unlock opportunities for college-bound students.
- 3. Best Practices:** We share insights and fresh approaches to the challenges facing America's higher education institutions.

The Edvance Foundation's Nexpection Network offers an elegant solution to the question of how America provides access to qualified two-year community college graduates who seek a four-year degree. The Network is a creative, student-centered strategy to refocus institutional aid towards well-prepared students most motivated to receive it.

– **Margaret Daniels Tyler**, Visiting Fellow at the Frances Hesselbein Leadership Institute and Former Senior Program Officer at the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation

ABOUT THE NEXPECTION NETWORK, OUR FLAGSHIP PROGRAM

The Nexpection Network, the first program supported by the Edvance Foundation, is designed to create stronger pathways to higher education success for exceptional students from low- to moderate-income families and diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds – students who typically need help “threading the needle of the American dream.”⁸

Making the leap from a community college to a selective four-year institution requires overcoming a host of social, cultural, political, familial, and economic barriers. The economic barriers alone can be daunting, given an average annual price tag of \$36,300 for tuition, room, and board at four-year independent colleges and universities.⁹ Low- to moderate-income students, many of whom are the first in their families to attend college at any level, often are already struggling to make ends meet and are unaware of how to tap into the \$18 billion a year in institutional aid available at independent colleges and universities. According to a 2009 research report, about 58 percent of community college students enroll in school only part time, and 66 percent work more than 20 hours per week to support their families and finance their educations.¹⁰ That doesn't leave much time for these students to imagine – let alone research and plan for – a future that includes studying at a four-year institution.

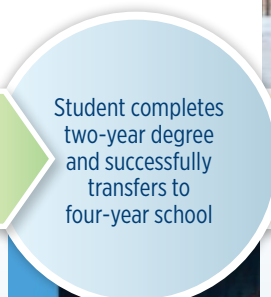
Paving a smoother pathway to success for deserving students requires a multi-faceted, student-centered strategy, with thoughtful interventions at all



stages. That kind of approach is at the heart of the Nexpection Network, which has been modeled on a successful four-year pilot program at Bucknell University and seven other prestigious institutions. The program brings together regionally based consortia of two-year colleges and four-year independent colleges and universities, and provides a carefully designed portfolio of cost-effective systems, practical tools, and hands-on support for students and institutions alike.

nexpectationnetwork

THE STUDENT EXPERIENCE



Community College
Year 1

Community College
Year 2

Four-Year College
or University

Student gets on
the road to success
in today's global
knowledge economy

Student enrolls in Nexpectation Network and engages with Success Counselor who will:

- Raise awareness of opportunities for higher education
- Advise on rigorous course selection
- Provide academic & life skills coaching
- Identify target schools based on best fit

Student signs non-binding letter of intent with "best-bet" school

Success Counselor continues to guide the student by:

- Helping to prepare e-portfolio (admissions credentials)
- Continuing to provide academic & personal mentoring
- Assisting with transfer application & financial aid process

Student submits formal application to four-year school



Throughout this time, the Nexpectation Network works with the college/university to:

- Create a welcoming campus culture
- Provide ongoing academic & personal support
- Create peer networks for transfer students



Post-graduation:

- Student participates in Nexpectation Network's longitudinal outcomes study

Design principles centered on student success

The design of the Nexpectation Network is based on the following core principles – all centered on boosting students' transfer and completion rates:

- **A shared commitment to creating pathways for promising students:** Participating four-year schools commit to provide at least 15 openings a year for transfer students from two-year colleges in the same regional network. They also commit to create a campus environment that will foster success for these transfer students. The two-year colleges, meanwhile, commit to prepare students academically for baccalaureate study and to leverage Nexpectation Network Success Counselors, who work one-on-one with participating students. Success Counselors serve as personal coaches,

helping each student shape a two-year academic program that will fully prepare him or her for a transfer. They also assist with the transfer application process and help students navigate the financial aid maze.

- **Early identification and decision making:** Students are informed about the opportunities available through the program very early in their two-year college experience. During the second semester of their first year, participating students work with their Success Counselors to explore transfer opportunities, identify a handful of four-year institutions that best fit their needs, skills, and preferences, and begin to prepare their application credentials (e-portfolios). Toward the end of this first year, students apply for early transfer consideration at their "best-bet" schools; they then

sign a non-binding letter of intent and begin the “pathway” with one school. Students complete the application process early in the second semester of their second year.

- **Sustained advising and mentoring:** Participating students remain connected to the Nexpectation Network throughout their higher education experience, both before and after they transfer from a community college to a four-year college or university. Throughout this period they receive a full range of academic, financial, and personal counseling, as well as peer mentoring services.

An outcomes assessment for each student is critical to ensure the success of the program. Early outcomes are captured in students’ e-portfolios, which form the basis of their applications to four-year schools. The process continues with rigorous assessments of students’ performance at the four-year schools at which they matriculate. It then follows the students post-graduation through a longitudinal outcomes study, repeated throughout their careers, that measures both professional and personal growth in quantifiable ways.

A proven model, ready to roll out nationwide

The principles underpinning the Nexpectation Network have been tested and proven through a four-year pilot program funded by the Jack Kent Cooke Foundation. From 2006 to 2010, the Community College Transfer Initiative (CCTI) provided support to eight selective colleges and universities¹¹ to increase their enrollment of high-achieving, low- to moderate-income community college transfer students, who otherwise may not have had the opportunity to attend a selective four-year institution. Almost 900 students matriculated at schools because of the CCTI between 2007 (when the first “official” participants enrolled) and 2010.¹² The graduation rate among the nearly 100 Bucknell University transfer students was even higher than the 89 percent rate achieved by students who matriculate at Bucknell as freshmen.

Based on an evaluation report prepared by the Center for Youth and Communities at Brandeis University’s Heller School for Social Policy and Management, all eight campuses improved their ability to systematically recruit qualified CCTI students and support their success, despite many challenges. According to the evaluation report:

- Four-year institutions benefited from increased diversity and from the CCTI students’ intellectual contributions and deep engagement on campus. The CCTI also improved collaboration and communication among schools, departments, and administrative offices.
- The CCTI also benefited students – at times truly transforming their lives. Many had not envisioned themselves even finishing community college, let alone succeeding at an elite four-year institution and (for many) planning to attend graduate school.¹³

Having led the CCTI while serving as president of Bucknell University and witnessed its positive impact, Edvance Foundation CEO Brian Mitchell is dedicated to rolling out the Nexpectation Network to institutions and students across the United States. By 2020, the goal is to enable at least 50,000 students annually to transition successfully from two- to four-year institutions. Moreover, we expect these students to earn baccalaureate degrees at rates at least as high as those achieved through the CCTI.

All participants stand to benefit

Participating students and institutions are not the only ones who stand to benefit from the Nexpectation Network. Ultimately, higher graduation rates will contribute to a stronger talent pipeline for American businesses and a more equitable society at large.

- **For qualified community college students,** the Nexpectation Network will provide critical support before, during, and after the transfer process; open doors to the \$18 billion in institutional aid available at independent colleges and universities each year; and, perhaps most importantly, make it possible for these students to fulfill their dreams of pursuing four-year degrees.



- **For community colleges**, the Nexpection Network will supplement constrained resources, increase associate degree completion rates, and likely burnish the reputations of those promising prospective students a pathway beyond two years. Community colleges will be charged a nominal membership fee of \$2,500 per year – enough to ensure that they are truly committed to the program and perceive value in participating.
- **For independent four-year colleges and universities**, the Nexpection Network presents a cost-effective solution for meeting strategic enrollment goals, increasing socioeconomic diversity, and managing capacity in underutilized departments. The annual fee charged to these schools will be \$15,000, which will cover up to 15 transfer students a year. On a per-student basis, this works out to considerably less than the estimated \$2,400 cost to four-year schools for recruitment and enrollment per student.¹⁴ Schools that take more than 15 transfers will pay an additional fee of \$900 per student.
- **For business and government leaders**, the Nexpection Network promises to bolster the supply of capable workers needed to ensure U.S. competitiveness in the global knowledge economy. State economic leaders and companies in need of college-educated workers in particular locations may wish to support the development of regional hubs that can benefit the local economy.

- **For foundations** interested in improving educational equity and access, the Nexpection Network complements and extends existing efforts to raise college success rates.

Solid groundwork underpins this investment opportunity

The work of the Edvance Foundation thus far has focused on completing research to validate our value proposition and our business model for the Nexpection Network. To date, we have spoken with more than 450 higher education leaders from both two-year and four-year institutions, mainly presidents, as part of a “listening tour” across the United States. Through these in-person visits and 10 webinars reaching more than 350 additional higher education leaders, we have gathered a wealth of informed opinions about what it will take to improve access to higher education and solicited useful feedback on our proposed program offerings and fee structure.

In addition, we conducted a comprehensive survey of more than 400 independent undergraduate four-year institutions to learn specifically about their current transfer practices. This survey, funded by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, validated both the need and willingness for collaboration to drive a national movement to increase access within the American higher education system. Key findings include the following:

- At most independent colleges and universities, institutional aid is readily available. However, only 9 percent of the four-year institutions surveyed provide early assurance of scholarship funds to high-achieving community college students.
- Of responding institutions, 45 percent offer orientation programs that are specifically tailored to the needs of students transferring from two-year institutions, and nearly half offer some form of ongoing student support program that specifically addresses their needs.¹⁵

STRATEGIC FUNDING PRIORITIES

Given the affirmation and overwhelming interest in our programs, the Edvance Foundation now seeks \$10 million in funding to support our next level of organizational growth and launch the Nexpectation Network over the next two to three years. We are in the early stages of developing a regional and national infrastructure linking two-year colleges and four-year independent institutions, which will be phased in through 2020.

In the short term, we have two primary goals for the Foundation:

- **Establish a strong and efficient national office.** The national office in Boston will serve as the backbone for all of the Edvance Foundation's programs and requires an infrastructure and staff that is both focused and nimble.
- **Begin to roll out the Nexpectation Network across the United States.** The national network will be developed in four phases through 2020. Our first phase targets seven key states where our research suggests we can achieve scale and results relatively quickly.

From the outset, our main goal is to build a sustainable organizational model in terms of our structure and financing. Assuming that we can secure funding to support the Edvance Foundation and that the Nexpectation Network membership grows according to plan over the next five years, we expect the Foundation to become self-sustaining thereafter, based on program fees and limited regional funding for the Network.

We seek your support during this start-up phase to help us achieve the following objectives and milestones.

1. Build out the Edvance Foundation national office.

We have established our national office in Boston, Massachusetts, a national hub for higher education, and have secured work space and staff support, initially through consulting partners, to complete the planning phase. At this point, our top priority is funding the hiring of critical permanent staff and the infrastructure needed to carry out our objectives.

TOTAL INVESTMENT NEEDED: \$5.8 million

Key Activities:

- Hire an experienced, resourceful, and distinguished full-time senior vice president for programs to

administer and oversee all of the Edvance Foundation's national programs, beginning with the rollout of the Nexpectation Network.

- Hire support staff – both in-house and third-party vendors – to support and sustain the national office, including personnel for essential tasks including bookkeeping, human resources, legal, technology, marketing and communications, and fundraising.
- Support basic infrastructure, including rent and utilities, equipment, and other general administrative costs.

2. Lay the foundation for the Nexpectation Network and roll out in select states.

Phase I states will include Massachusetts, Connecticut, Rhode Island, Pennsylvania, North Carolina, Texas, and Ohio. These were chosen based on (a) the concentration of two-year public and four-year independent colleges, (b) demonstrated leadership of existing complementary programs run by state governments, colleges and universities, and communities, and (c) favorable responses in our research sponsored by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and through the listening tour supported by the Jack Kent Cooke Foundation and Pfizer Foundation. We estimate this first phase will serve between 10,000 and 15,000 students.

TOTAL INVESTMENT NEEDED: \$4.2 million



Key Activities:

- **Build the technology infrastructure** to support an efficient network and provide easily accessible resources for students transitioning from two-year to four-year institutions. This will include a “technology backbone” allowing the Foundation to interface with state/regional centers and staff, two- and four-year institutions, Success Counselors in the field, and students; a data system to track students from the first point of contact through to alumni status; a search engine to help students research schools; a student e-portfolio that forms the basis for college applications; and a longitudinal outcomes study that establishes metrics to determine the program’s success and tracks key indicators over time.
- **Organize state offices and regional hubs.** As noted above, Phase I of the Nexpectation Network will be launched in seven states, and as the colleges and universities sign on and the state offices are established, the Network will create optimally located regional hubs. Establishing the infrastructure and partnerships around which to model the Network for maximum scalability is a critical phase of our programmatic development requiring dedicated investment.
- **Hire and train staff in state and regional offices.** While we anticipate the Network will be self-funding after five years through member/user fees from participating educational institutions and limited regional funding, for the Network to achieve success in Phase I we will need funding to recruit, hire, and train staff, including directors of admissions and regional directors in each new hub, as well as Success Counselors, who will serve students at a 150:1 ratio.

COMMITMENT TO MEASURING IMPACT

The Edvance Foundation is committed to the most effective use of our investors' contributions. We will report regularly on progress toward meeting our goals and track the following metrics (among others):

- Number of two-year colleges in the Network,
- Number of four-year institutions in the Network (independent and public),
- Number of state offices established,
- Number of regional hubs established,
- Number of students having transferred from two- to four-year schools,
- Graduation rates for transfer students at four-year schools, and
- Cost savings to each institution.

Although our strategy is ambitious, we know there is a clear opportunity to impact hundreds of two- and four-year colleges and universities and thousands of deserving students even in our first few years. Over this period, too, we will validate the scalability and sustainability of our strategy to ensure a robust, competitive U.S. workforce for the 21st century. We thank you for considering an investment in the Edvance Foundation.

Endnotes

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- 5 U.S. Department of Education, Community Colleges: Special Supplement to The 2008 Condition of Education, National Center for Educational Statistics, Washington, DC, August 2008.
- 6 Natalia Kolesnikova, *Community Colleges: A Route of Upward Economic Mobility*, Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis, March 2009.
- 7 Alicia C. Dowd et al, *Transfer Access to Elite Colleges and Universities in the United States: Threading the Needle of the American Dream*, 2006.
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- 10 Vianny Orozco and Nancy K. Cauthen, *Work Less, Study More & Succeed: How Financial Supports Can Improve Postsecondary Success*, Demos Postsecondary Success Series, 2009.
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- 13 Ibid.
- 14 Melissa E. Clinedinst, Sarah F. Hurley, and David A. Hawkins. 2011 State of College Admission. National Association for College Admission Counseling (NACAC). October 2011. <http://www.nacacnet.org/research/research-data/Documents/2011SOCA.pdf>
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The Edvance Foundation is the only organization of its kind, focused on access to higher education for students who are bright and capable, but often overlooked. Increasing our pool of four-year college graduates is critical for success in today's global knowledge economy, and the Edvance Foundation provides the tools to make that happen.

— Arthur J. Rothkopf, Chairman of the Edvance Foundation

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