



Benefits Access for College Completion

Amy Ellen Duke-Benfield, BACC Director, CLASP
June 24, 2014

CLASP and the Center for Postsecondary and Economic Success

- Through **careful research and analysis and effective advocacy**, CLASP develops and promotes new ideas, mobilizes others, and directly assists governments and advocates to put in place successful strategies that deliver results that matter to people across America.
- C-PES advocates for **better policies, more investment, and increased political will** to increase the number of low-income adults and disadvantaged youth who earn postsecondary credentials that are essential to opening doors to good jobs, career advancement, and economic mobility.

Hypothesis

Providing students who are struggling to make ends meet with information about public benefits and assistance in applying for them will improve student success and college completion rates and reduce material hardship.



Benefits Access for College Completion

- An initiative geared toward increasing access to public benefits for community college students
- Supporting colleges developing sustainable models that build benefits access into the everyday activities across the college
- BACC is a partnership between CLASP, the American Association of Community Colleges and five foundations

Participating Colleges

- Cuyahoga Community College (OH)
- Gateway Community and Technical College (KY)
- LaGuardia Community College (NY)
- Lake Michigan College (MI)
- Macomb Community College (MI)
- Northampton Community College (PA)
- Skyline College (CA)

What are “public benefits”?

- Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)
- Health insurance (Medicaid and CHIP)
- Family programs
 - TANF, child care subsidies, Women, Infants and Children (WIC) food and formula, free and reduced school lunch
- Refundable Tax Credits
 - Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) & American Opportunity Tax Credit (AOTC)
- Special programs
 - Disability benefits, Veterans benefits, UI, TAA, WIA ITAs and other supports

Why don't more students access benefits?

- Lack of information, misinformation about eligibility
 - Don't know that programs exist
 - Think they are not eligible
 - Don't know how to apply or where to get help
 - Feel the benefit is not worth the hassle
 - Don't see themselves as target for public benefit programs
- Applying is often time consuming, frustrating
 - Same information collected multiple times
 - Need documentation of income, family status
- Stigma and other social/cultural barriers



How are colleges helping students access public benefits?

- **Inform** students about the existence of programs
- **Help** students understand how to apply
- **Screen** students to determine if they are eligible and assist them to apply
- **Assist** students to provide needed documentation and understand any barriers to eligibility
- **Follow-up** with benefits programs/local offices to troubleshoot on behalf of individual students
- **Advocate** for policy changes that streamline benefits receipt for students

BACC college strategy highlights

- Engage a broad-based team to embed activities across college
- Develop a process for engaging students that includes:
 - Reaching out to students in multiple ways
 - Setting up places to apply depending on student needs
 - Helping students apply and submit documentation
 - Providing follow-up assistance to ensure students receive benefits

College Strategy Highlights

- Integrate benefits discussions/application into financial aid, career services, advising and counseling processes
- Integrate a module about benefits in orientation, student success courses, and other courses
- Use students to help market, do outreach, and serve students
- Where available, use online eligibility screeners and online applications to assist students

For more information

Contact:

Amy Ellen Duke-Benfield,
aduke@clasp.org

