



Building momentum for postsecondary success

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STRONG START TO FINISH MAKES INVESTMENTS TO ADVANCE DEVELOPMENTAL EDUCATION REFORM

Grants total more than \$5.3 million and expand initiative's impact to nearly 5 million undergraduates

(DENVER) – June 24, 2020 – [Strong Start to Finish](#) (SSTF) has awarded a second round of pooled funding, totaling more than \$5.3 million, to accelerate the developmental education reform movement. The grants expand the initiative's footprint to nearly 5 million undergraduates in 96 universities and 277 community colleges across 12 states.

The initiative of [Education Commission of the States](#) aims to significantly increase the number and proportion of low-income students, students of color and returning adults who succeed in college math and English in their first year. Work underway since 2018 has already shown promising results, including higher completion rates in first-year math and English.

The [latest grants](#) build on the initiative's success and fall into three main categories:

- To spur equity-centered research, practice and policy invention and innovation;
- To address emergent scaling challenges at current scaling sites; and
- To seed readiness at systems preparing to implement developmental education reforms at scale.

The funding for the projects was announced in the fall of 2019 as a new pooled investment by SSTF's funders, Ascendium Education Group, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and The Kresge Foundation. Shortly after, SSTF solicited applications for research projects to fund, with the goal of equitizing research in higher education. Each award directly relates to one of the seven [Core Principles](#) SSTF released at its annual Learning Network Convening in March, in a document titled *Core Principles for Transforming Remediation Within a Comprehensive Student Success Strategy: A Statement from the Field*.

"The work of improving student access and success in gateway courses like college math and English is paramount to broader educational goals around degree completion and workforce development," said Jeremy Anderson, president of Education Commission of the States. "This new investment expands the reach of Strong Start to Finish, broadening both its impact and the body of research and practice from which institution and state leaders can draw to make policy decisions that encourage more student-centric models at scale."

Under the equity-centered research, practice and policy invention and innovation category, awards are earmarked for partner-led research, policy, and practice projects that emerge from equity frameworks and support aspects of developmental education reform at scale. The second category aims to address challenges at current scaling sites that were either unanticipated, unknown or under-addressed in the

original site work plans submitted as part of the initial scaling site selection proposal process. The final category supports targeted technical and strategic assistance of ongoing efforts of systems preparing to implement developmental education reforms at scale. These will be known as “Strategy Sites.”

The new Strategy Sites are: Colorado Department of Higher Education, Louisiana Board of Regents, Minnesota State Colleges and Universities, Nevada System of Higher Education, Oregon Community College Association, Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education, and Tennessee Board of Regents – The College System of Tennessee.

SSTF began its work with four initial systems, known as Scaling Sites, in early 2018 -- City University of New York (CUNY), Ohio Department of Higher Education, State University of New York (SUNY) and University System of Georgia (USG). Since then it has added as Scaling Sites: Arkansas Community Colleges (ACC) and the Arkansas Department of Higher Education, and California Community Colleges, which is spearheaded by the California Community College Chancellor’s Office (CCCCO) and the Foundation for California Community Colleges.

“Our original scaling sites, CUNY, ODHE, SUNY, and USG, are showing promising results,” said Christopher M. Mullin, PhD, Director of SSTF. “Early data shows nearly 50 percent for students who were enrolled in fall semester 2018 completed a gateway math and English course in their first year. While we still have much to understand – and this round of funding will help us learn and disseminate even more information – we know that reforms work. We also know our students need us to recalibrate our practice and rewrite our policies based upon what we know to be true.”

For specifics on the grant projects, please visit strongstart.org/connect/grants-information.

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About Strong Start to Finish

Strong Start to Finish is a network of like-minded individuals and organizations from the policy, research and practice spaces who’ve come together for one reason – to help all students, not just the select few, find success in postsecondary education. SSTF is an initiative supported by Education Commission of the States, a nonpartisan organization that conducts research, delivers reports, provides expert counsel on the full spectrum of education policy issues, and convenes education leaders across the 50 states to learn from each other. For more information on Strong Start to Finish, please visit www.strongstart.org or call (303) 299-3683.