

POLICY PRIORITIES



**A Leading Voice Championing
College Access & Success**

**Meeting the Needs
of all Students in
the 21st Century**





INSTITUTE FOR HIGHER EDUCATION POLICY

**A LEADING VOICE
CHAMPIONING
COLLEGE ACCESS
AND SUCCESS**



We intend to do more than tinker at the margins. We seek real change.”

In 1993, the Institute for Higher Education Policy (IHEP) was established to provide policy-relevant research to promote college access and success for underserved students. Since then, IHEP has become one of the most effective voices for educating policy-makers and postsecondary leaders on strategies for and solutions to our nation’s most pressing education challenges. Recognizing our valued role to the postsecondary community, IHEP is proud to announce a new policy agenda—one that is grounded in our rich history of leadership and service, and is also responsive to the needs of today’s students. Through our efforts, we intend to do more than tinker at the margins. We seek real change. Ultimately, IHEP’s aim is that underrepresented students have a real chance—one that allows them access to a quality, affordable education that not only transforms their lives, but also strengthens the fabric of society.



Only with policies that open doors *and* stimulate innovation in quality education can we effectively address the needs of all 21st-century students.”






WHAT WE BELIEVE

IHEP embraces a vision in which all people, regardless of background or circumstance, have the opportunity to reach their full potential by participating and succeeding in higher education.

To fully achieve this vision, the postsecondary community, as a whole, must do more to meet the needs of students who are underserved by the educational system. Institutional leaders and policymakers at all levels must become engaged and must support efforts to dramatically enhance the quality of the postsecondary experience—in ways that are relevant to the demands of the 21st century. Only with policies that open doors *and* stimulate innovation in quality education can we effectively address the needs of all 21st-century students—a growing percentage of whom are low income, students of color, and adults—pursuing new career pathways.

IHEP'S POLICY PRIORITIES

**MEETING
THE NEEDS
OF ALL
STUDENTS
IN THE
21ST CENTURY**



Recognizing that too many of today's college students still encounter obstacles as they seek to access and matriculate through college, our goal is to more aggressively provide the research and analytic tools needed to educate and drive national, state, local, and institutional efforts in support of education reform.

To achieve stronger educational outcomes for underserved students, we expect to align future work with IHEP's four priorities:

- 1 Elevate Effective Pathways for Increased Degree Attainment**

- 2 Enhance Affordability and Reshape College Finance Systems**

- 3 Promote and Improve Meaningful Accountability and Consumer Awareness**

- 4 Support Communities and Critical Institutions Serving 21st-Century Students**

Elevate Effective Pathways for Increased Degree Attainment

Underrepresented and nontraditional students, whose numbers are growing dramatically, reflect broader changes in American society. Ensuring that these students achieve their full potential in higher education is a national imperative. To achieve this goal, policymakers and practitioners must affirm their commitment to diversity and equity, but more importantly, they must champion efforts that lead to better educational and workforce outcomes for today's students.

To more effectively serve today's students, IHEP will:

- Refocus the postsecondary agenda to ensure a targeted, deliberate focus on increasing both college access and success for the 21st-century student.
- Examine the impact that our nation's changing demographics have on policies related to college enrollment, engagement, completion, and workforce development.
- Encourage the use of disaggregated demographic data—such as on first-generation, low-income, racial/ethnic minority students; adult students; students with second-language backgrounds; undocumented students; veterans; students with disabilities; and foster care, disconnected, and formerly incarcerated youth—to inform the practices and policies that may hold promise for specific groups of students.
- Examine newer approaches to and emerging trends in college access and success, to ensure that they offer students high-quality, affordable options that do not widen existing opportunity gaps and lead to more stratification within the higher education system.



IHEP INNOVATES

For two decades, IHEP has provided the field with quality data and research that has sparked innovation and trends in key areas. At nearly 400 community colleges, and Minority-Serving Institutions (MSIs) in particular, IHEP has prompted efforts that have led to pedagogical and curricular reforms, the use of data and metrics for institutional improvement and accountability, and the creation of public-private partnerships to leverage resources. Additionally, IHEP has facilitated leadership development programs and institutes that have expanded the expertise of individuals committed to educating underserved students well.

Specific research and initiatives that have already led to institution- and system-wide innovation include the following:

- **Project Win-Win** (2009–13) changed how state systems and two- and four-year institutions identify, graduate, and reengage students who have left college just short of an associate's degree and has spurred reforms that are removing barriers that can lead to the early departure of students who are "near completers."
- **MSI Models of Success Program** (2010–13) and **Walmart Minority Student Success Initiative** (2008–12) are the most recent iterations of IHEP's longstanding work to build institutional capacity and spur classroom-based educational reforms at MSIs. A number of participating institutions have institutionalized these reform measures and, as a result, have seen continual improvements in student retention and graduation.

Enhance Affordability and Reshape College Finance Systems

At a time when a college degree or credential is increasingly important to employment, wages, and civic outcomes, we must ensure that student success is predicated on more than family income or the ability to pay for college. Numerous studies—written by IHEP and others—have demonstrated the benefits of prioritizing financial resources to those with the greatest need, particularly those who would not otherwise be able to attend and complete college. Improving educational opportunity for these students will require postsecondary leaders to commit to making college more affordable and to reconsider the current finance system.

To stimulate progress in these areas, IHEP will:

- Monitor trends in higher education financing at the federal, state, and institutional levels and advance strategies that work in concert—rather than at cross-purposes—to provide financial supports to low- and moderate-income students.
- Explore strategies that help low- and moderate-income students complete college with manageable debt levels that can be repaid in a simple and timely manner.
- Examine institutional revenue and spending patterns to illustrate the financial implications of targeted access and success initiatives.
- Promote strategies that slow rising college costs and prioritize institutional spending on effective access and success efforts.



IHEP EDUCATES

Educating policymakers, postsecondary leaders, and key partners about the value of higher education, especially for underserved populations, is of paramount importance. Because of this, IHEP has always centralized the experiences of these students in all its work. As a result, these students continue to be featured prominently in national policy dialogues.

Examples of targeted research and high-profile convenings, designed to educate key audiences, include:

- **The National Summit on the Investment Payoff** (2012) brought together national leaders to discuss strategies to better ensure that investing in postsecondary education “pays off” for both students and society. This work continues to inform ongoing policy debates about the benefits of college and extends IHEP’s earlier research, including *The Investment Payoff: A 50-State Analysis of the Public and Private Benefits of Higher Education* (2005).
- **Smart Money: Informing Higher Education Philanthropy** (2011) spawned investments in cities and metropolitan areas seeking to enhance local effort and support for increasing college access and completion.
- **Delinquency: The Untold Story of Student Loan Borrowing** (2011) and the work of the **Reimagining Aid Design and Delivery** (initiated in 2012) project and consortia have identified new solutions to simplify the financial aid process, increase the transparency of postsecondary outcomes, and improve consumer awareness and protections, while also facilitating more informed conversations about student debt and its impact on today’s postsecondary borrowers.

Promote and Improve Meaningful Accountability and Consumer Awareness

To promote positive student outcomes and good stewardship of public dollars, we must hold institutions accountable for college access, affordability, and student success. The need for greater accountability and transparency has been fueled by recent debates over the value of a college education. While many in the postsecondary community can affirm the importance of a college degree or credential, those benefits are not always as apparent to students, families, employers, and the general public.

To promote student success and protect the public investment in postsecondary education, IHEP will:

- Encourage postsecondary and civic leaders to better articulate goals and strategies for underrepresented students' success and use tools for measuring the return on investment for these students, their families, employers, and the public.
- Develop and promote a core set of questions—and accompanying data points and sources—needed to inform postsecondary education for consumer, accountability, and improvement purposes.
- Develop and enhance metrics and tools that will (1) help identify gaps in institutional capacity to deliver high-quality educational experiences and offer transparent pathways for students; (2) provide opportunities for statewide and institutional improvement; and (3) ensure better analytics of the best practices and policies for scaling and replication.
- Advance broad-scale strategies and initiatives designed to improve teaching, learning, and success outcomes for students.



IHEP LEADS

For 20 years, IHEP has led the field and harnessed its diverse networks toward the recognition and advancement of successful strategies for educating today's students and preparing them for the workforce. IHEP has leveraged its own skills and resources by building strategic partnerships with policy and education experts—nationally and internationally.

Some of IHEP's most significant partnerships include:

- **The “postsecondary data quality effort”** (initiated in 2013), which is responsive to the need for quality postsecondary data—from consumers wanting to make more informed decisions about college, to institutions seeking to improve outcomes, to policymakers aiming to ensure efficient and effective use of public funds and scarce resources.
- **The Pathways to College Network** (transferred to IHEP in 2009) is an alliance of national partners—K–12 practitioners, college access providers, associations, and research and policy organizations—working collaboratively to improve college access and success for underserved students.
- **The International Rankings Expert Group** (launched in 2004) is a multinational initiative established to promote a system of continuous improvement of country-specific and international college ranking efforts, particularly around issues of student equity and institutional diversity, data transparency, and student outcome measures.
- **The Alliance for Equity in Higher Education** (launched in 1999) was facilitated by IHEP as a first-of-its-kind partnership of the American Indian Higher Education Consortium, the Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities, and the National Association for Equal Opportunity in Higher Education to represent the shared interests of MSIs.

Support Communities and Critical Institutions Serving 21st-Century Students

The role of colleges and universities in educating today's students cannot be overstated. The need to produce graduates who contribute to the workforce and the betterment of society is especially critical now. Therefore, it is imperative for colleges and universities to educate today's students well. To do so will require institutional leaders and others across the postsecondary community to model and advance effective and scalable solutions for the 21st-century student. In addition, postsecondary leaders will need to work with community partners—business, civic, faith-based, and so on—to develop relevant educational and workforce strategies for local and regional advancement.

To achieve these aims, IHEP will:

- Promote strong college–community collaborations that provide a foundation for the advancement of workforce, cultural, and civic engagement.
- Identify and highlight promising practices of institutions serving underrepresented students well and encourage the alignment of evidence-based strategies and systems of accountability that support student success.
- Provide opportunities for institutions, place-based stakeholders, and national partners to work collaboratively to implement, scale, and sustain systemic access and success efforts.





NEXT STEPS



IHEP is recognized as a formidable advocate for underserved students.”

IHEP’s imprint on issues of college access and success is indelible. Because of the organization’s ability to investigate innovative research questions, educate policymakers and key constituents on a wide array of topics, and demonstrate consistent leadership in the field, IHEP is recognized as a formidable advocate for underserved students.

Moving forward, IHEP will continue to spur innovation through its research and initiatives. We will remain focused on addressing educational challenges that have long plagued the system, while simultaneously contending with new issues brought on by changing demographics, increasing labor market needs, and expanding technology. In addition, we will continue to work with and learn from policy, research, and educational leaders—domestically and internationally—who are committed to diversity and equity and are advancing techniques and strategies that support IHEP’s mission.

As we reflect on our past and eagerly approach the future, IHEP’s longstanding commitment and track record of proven success positions us well to maintain our leadership and proudly carry forth the torch of college access and success.



HIGHLIGHTING 20 YEARS OF IMPACT

On April 13, 1993, the Institute for Higher Education Policy (IHEP) was established to expand college opportunity for the most underserved populations, positioning IHEP as a leading Champion of Access and Success in both the United States and around the world. Our 20th anniversary provided an exciting occasion to reflect on the ways in which our work has strengthened access and success for all students.

This timeline highlights one to two major IHEP contributions per year—just a sampling of our 20 years of impact on the field of higher education policy.

1993

The **Institute for Higher Education Policy (IHEP)** is founded as an independent voice on issues of postsecondary access and success.

1994

National organizations tap IHEP to study the impact of financial aid policies on student access, evaluate college preparation programs, and design new supports for students in federal and state aid programs.

1995

IHEP's first publications—***The Impact of Federal Financial Aid Policy Changes on Community College Students*** and ***College Debt and the American Family***—highlight the relationship between financing college and student access and success.

1996

Graduating into Debt: The Burdens of Borrowing for Graduate and Professional Students provides the first, national analysis of graduate student borrowing patterns.

Life after 40: A New Portrait of Today's—and Tomorrow's—Postsecondary Students garners early attention to participation and success patterns of adult learners.

1997

The New Millennium Project on Higher Education Costs, Pricing, and Productivity is launched to develop fresh, practical solutions for colleges and universities to increase productivity, maintain quality and access, and manage costs.

Missed Opportunities: A New Look at Disadvantaged College Aspirants identifies obstacles—such as welfare participation, parental divorce, and first-generation status—that redefine the nation's educationally disadvantaged.

1998

Reaping the Benefits: Defining the Public and Private Value of Going to College introduces a multi-dimensional representation of the public and private benefits of a college education.

IHEP advocates for the term **“Minority-Serving Institutions” (MSIs)** to collectively refer to Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HSIs), and Tribal Colleges and Universities (TCUs).

1999

The Tuition Puzzle: Putting Pieces Together raises alarm over the crisis of rising tuition and encourages states and institutions to curb future price escalation.

IHEP facilitates the launch of **The Alliance for Equity in Higher Education**—a first-of-its-kind partnership of the American Indian Higher Education Consortium, the Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities, and the National Association for Equal Opportunity in Higher Education—to represent the shared interests of MSIs.

2000

Quality on the Line: Benchmarks for Success in Internet-Based Distance Education establishes a set of research-driven quality standards for distance learning in higher education.

Funding South African Higher Education: Steering Mechanisms to Meet National Goals provides South African policy groups guidance for implementing a new national higher education policy framework and funding mechanism.

2001

A Classification System for 2-Year Postsecondary Institutions offers a new approach to classifying two-year colleges that better accounts for their diversity, size, and purpose.

IHEP builds on its long-term commitment to highlighting the important role TCUs play in meeting the educational and economic development needs of Native American communities in ***Building Strong Communities: Tribal Colleges as Engaged Institutions***.

2002

IHEP President and Founder Jamie P. Merisotis receives the National Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators' (NASFAA) **Robert P. Huff Golden Quill Award** for his contributions to student financial aid research.

The **Kellogg MSI Leadership Fellows** program is established to identify and mentor the next generation of presidents and senior executives for the nation's MSIs.

2003

Reauthorizing the Higher Education Act: Issues and Options serves as a primer for policymakers debating and developing policy options for key higher education issues.

The colloquium, ***Slipping Through the Cracks: The Changing Dimensions of Disadvantage in American Higher Education***, initiates a multi-year effort to spotlight the postsecondary experiences of foster youth, students with disabilities, incarcerated youth, and other marginalized students.

2004

Private Loans and Choice in Financing Higher Education wins NASFAA's Robert P. Huff Golden Quill Award for bringing national policy attention to the rapidly growing reliance on private loans to meet the financial needs of underserved students.

IHEP co-founds the **International Rankings Expert Group** to promote transparency and accountability for institutional ranking systems around the world.

2005

The Investment Payoff: A 50-State Analysis of the Public and Private Benefits of Higher Education shows that investment in postsecondary education has dramatic and measurable impacts on states and their citizens.

IHEP convenes the first of six annual **Summer Academies**, ultimately assisting over 250 institutions in making dramatic improvements to the ways in which they retain and graduate students.

2006

Convergence: Trends Threatening to Narrow College Opportunity in America warns that the confluence of multiple federal, state, and institutional factors will undermine postsecondary opportunity for underserved students in the coming decade.

The **Global Policy Fellows** program is launched to improve the knowledge and skills of international policy leaders—from the United States, Brazil, Mongolia, South Africa, the Netherlands, and Ukraine—working to improve postsecondary opportunities for disadvantaged populations in their home countries.

2007

IHEP unveils a new “brand” and expands its mission as a domestic and global policy leader for postsecondary education.

Opening Doors to the American Dream: Increasing Higher Education Access and Success for Immigrants advocates for the removal of policy barriers encountered by legal immigrants seeking access to U.S. higher education.

2008

The 2005 report, ***Learning to Reduce Recidivism: A 50-State Analysis of Postsecondary Correctional Education Policy***, prompts direct federal policy action in support of college opportunities for prisoners.

IHEP partners with USA Funds to facilitate and support the first of four annual **Symposia on Financial Literacy and College Success at Minority-Serving Institutions**.

2009

IHEP assumes leadership of the **Pathways to College Network**, an alliance of national organizations committed to advancing college opportunity.

Diversifying the STEM Pipeline: The Model Replication Institutions Program outlines evidence-based approaches for enhancing and strengthening STEM student success programs at MSIs and other institutions critical to improving the nation's global competitiveness and increasing equity in STEM education.

2010

The **National Coalition for College Completion (NCCC)**, a partnership organization that includes the voice of stakeholders not traditionally included in the college completion agenda, is launched to add critical sectors to the national dialogue. NCCC is later recognized by the **Clinton Global Initiative**.

A year of recognition for IHEP staff: President Michelle Asha Cooper is recognized as a "powerful visionary" by **ESSENCE magazine**, CFAO Lisa M. Stewart receives the **CFO Rising Star Award**, and Vice President for Research Alisa Federico Cunningham receives **NASFAA's Robert P. Huff Golden Quill Award**.

2011

IHEP receives the prestigious **Special Merit Award** from the Association for the Study of Higher Education (ASHE).

Delinquency: The Untold Story of Student Loan Borrowing provides a more complete understanding of student loan burdens facing today's postsecondary borrowers.

2012

Through NCCC, IHEP builds on its **metropolitan statistical area research** to encourage localized student access and success work by showcasing cross-sector and cross-border completion campaigns.

The **National Summit on the Investment Payoff** reinvigorates the national policy dialogue around the investment payoff for underserved students by focusing on how changes in the economic and social conditions over the last decade have impacted the benefits of higher education.



The Institute for Higher Education Policy (IHEP) is a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization committed to promoting access to and success in higher education for all students. Based in Washington, D.C., IHEP develops innovative policy- and practice-oriented research to guide policymakers and education leaders, who develop high-impact policies that will address our nation's most pressing education challenges.



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