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SOUTHERN STATE COMMUNITY COLLEGE PRESS RELEASE

Southern State Joins College Completion Accelerator to Boost Student Outcomes and Completion Rates

Southern State Community College has joined the Complete College Accelerator, an ambitious nationwide initiative to improve student success and close gaps in college access and completion.

Southern State is one of 11 state partners, just over 80 higher education institutions nationwide, to join Complete College America, a national nonprofit organization on a mission to raise postsecondary attainment nationally, in the initial Complete College Accelerator cohort.

With funding from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation's Intermediaries for Scale (IFS) initiative, Complete College America will work with eleven state agencies over the next four years to implement research-based practices designed to dramatically increase college completion on a statewide scale.

"We are pleased to have been selected in this highly competitive process," says Southern State's Vice President of Academic and Student Affairs Dr. Erika Goodwin. "We are excited to collaborate with institutional teams to improve college completion outcomes for populations of students who have historically been excluded from higher education," she adds.

Utilizing funding from the national grant program, Southern State will work with Complete College America to conduct assessments of institutional performance, build data capacity, and develop and implement strategies to improve student outcomes.

As part of the national Complete College Accelerator network, Southern State will have access to innovations and best practices from other Accelerator systems and institutions. Southern State will also share its successes and best practices with institutions nationwide as part of the Accelerator.

Southern State is committed to its mission to provide accessible, affordable, and high-quality education to people in southern Ohio. The College's main service area is the five-county region of Adams, Brown, Clinton, Fayette, and Highland Counties. The institution is dedicated to meeting people where they are and delivering the highest quality programs and services possible.

Nationally, about [90%](#) of students from under-resourced families do not graduate within six years—let alone four. According to [NASPA's Center for First-generation Student Success](#), 56% of first-generation college students had not attained a postsecondary credential after six years. Research from the [U.S. Department of Education's National Center for Education Statistics](#) shows that 6-year graduation rates for Black and Latinx students stand at 51.5%, lower than graduation rates for White students.

"While persistence and retention are finally returning to pre-pandemic levels at both two-year and four-year institutions, there are troubling gaps in access, completion, and career outcomes that continue to persist for students from underserved communities," said Yolanda Watson Spiva, Ph.D., President of College Completion Accelerator.

"As institutions and economies continue to shift following the pandemic, taking action now is critical to long-term success. Through the Complete College Accelerator, these eleven states and more than eighty participating institutions will build their capacity to scale, implement, and sustain evidence-based practices

that improve college completion rates for all students. We are proud to partner with Southern State Community College on this effort,” Spiva adds.

The Complete College Accelerator builds upon CCA’s long track record of developing the capacity of states, higher education systems, and campuses to create and implement data-informed transformative policies and practices. The selection of state partners is the result of a competitive RFP process, which launched in February. Participating states were selected from members of the Complete College America Alliance— which includes senior leadership from states, systems, institutional consortia, and partner organizations— and in turn, selected the participating institutions.

Originally launched in January 2020, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation’s Intermediaries for Scale Initiative is designed to help build the capacity of colleges and universities across the country to implement proven strategies for improving student success at scale. CCA is among six selected entities that will now work over 5 years to increase student success through institutional transformation. The members of the IFS Cohort include [UNCF](#), the [American Association of State Colleges & Universities \(AASCU\)](#), the [American Indian Higher Education Consortium \(AIHEC\)](#), [Excelencia in Education](#), and [Growing Inland Achievement \(GIA\)](#).

In addition to Ohio, the initial cohort of Complete College Accelerator states includes:

- Kentucky Council on Postsecondary Education
- Louisiana Board of Regents
- Maine Community College System
- Minnesota Private Colleges Council
- Missouri Commission of Higher Education and Workforce Development
- New Mexico Higher Education Department
- South Carolina Commission on Higher Education
- Vermont State University
- Washington Student Achievement Council
- University of Wisconsin System

To learn more, visit completercollege.org/intermediaries-for-scale.

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