

AN OPEN LETTER TO THE
LEADERS OF AMERICAN EDUCATION

From the Board of Trustees of the College Board

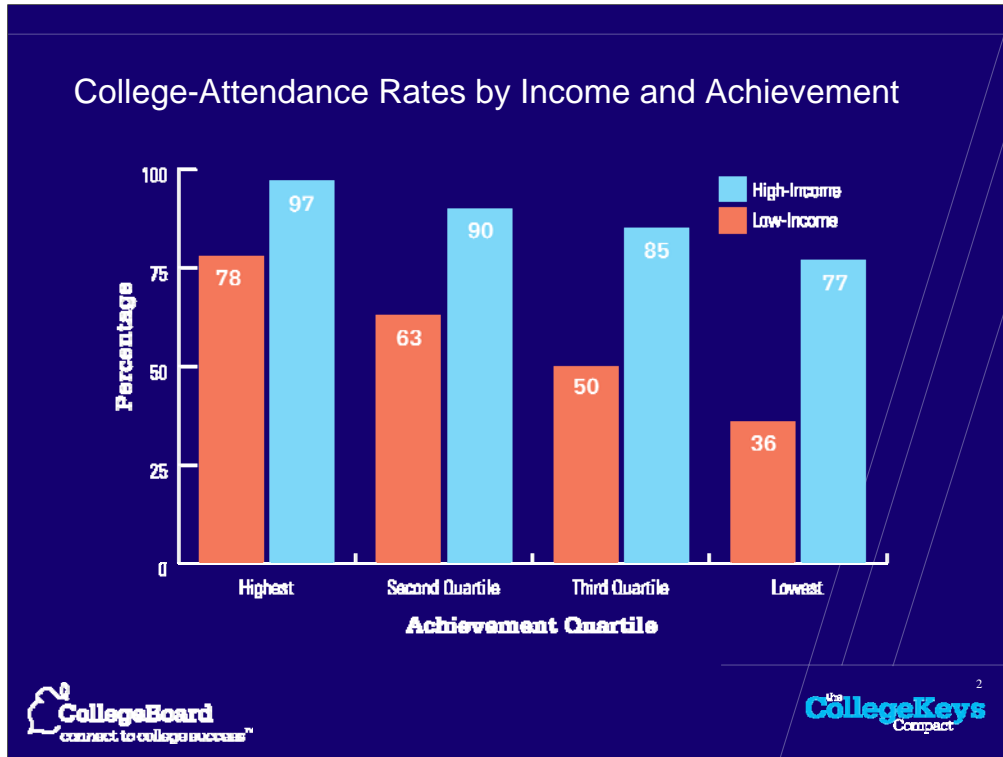
the CollegeKeys Compact

Overview / Implementation /
Action Strategies



Fall
2008

The CollegeKeys Compact™ is a trustee-led initiative that was publicly launched in 2007. Their vision was fueled by a continuing need in American education to provide college access to low-income students.



The lowest performing high-income students are just as likely to go to college as the highest performing low-income students. As recent data indicate, if only 20 percent of the current 9th graders are even considering college as a post-graduation alternative, we have to be seriously worried about the increasing disparities between our high-income student and our low-income students.

Special Task Force Created March 2005

- To address continued concern that students from low-income backgrounds do not enroll in higher education in proportion to their numbers even when they are academically prepared
- To use this effort as a way of focusing on the mission of the College Board



Purpose of the Task Force

- To forge a *collaborative agreement* between the College Board and its members that will create a commonly accepted definition of “low-income”
- To seek to remove ALL identifiable barriers, including the very important but often overlooked non-financial barriers, to college access for those who meet that definition



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Commitment to Low Income Students

The College Board considers the following students to be low-income:

- Students enrolled in schools with large numbers of students from low-income backgrounds or enrolled in schools with low college-going or high dropout rates

-OR-

- Students whose families are eligible to receive economic subsidies targeted to low-income families, including students who are:

- Eligible for free or reduced-price lunch programs
- Part of a family receiving public assistance
- Residents of federally subsidized housing

-OR-

- Students who are homeless, in foster care, or deemed to be wards of the court

-OR-

- Students who will be first-generation college attendees



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Barriers—Three Major Categories

- Getting Ready: Preparation and Planning
- Getting In: Admission and Financial Aid
- Getting Through: Achievement and Success

Getting Ready

We believe that all students are capable of being prepared for postsecondary education and that educators, families, communities, and policymakers have the responsibility to ensure that all students, including those from low-income backgrounds, graduate from high school ready for college success.



Getting In

We believe that all qualified students from low-income backgrounds should receive particular consideration in recruitment, admission, and financial aid and that colleges and universities should make every effort to meet the financial need of this population in ways which make enrollment and full participation in the college experience possible.



Getting Through

We believe that colleges and universities have a responsibility to provide essential academic support, financial aid, and targeted social and emotional support to ensure that all enrolled students will have every chance to succeed in their chosen academic programs.



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Statement of Beliefs

The CollegeKeys Compact™ Statement of Beliefs

In recognition of the right of every student to prepare for, enroll in, and succeed in college, as a member of the College Board's CollegeKeys Compact™ we believe that:

- All students are capable of being prepared for college and that educators, families, communities, and policymakers have the responsibility to ensure that all students, including those from low-income backgrounds, graduate from high school ready for college success.
- All qualified students from low-income backgrounds should receive particular consideration in recruitment, admissions, and financial aid, and that colleges and universities should make every effort to meet the financial needs of this population in ways that make enrollment and full participation in the college experience possible.
- Colleges and universities have a responsibility to provide essential academic support, financial aid, and targeted social and emotional support to ensure that all enrolled students will have every chance to succeed in their chosen academic programs.



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You will be asked to sign a Statement of Beliefs.

College Board Commitment

- Establish the CollegeKeys Compact™
- Implement and maintain the Compact™
- Establish a goal of eliminating all fees associated with admissions and financial aid for targeted students
- Build on effective policy and practice
- Share successful programs and self-evaluation
- Serve as a relentless advocate
- Establish a recognition program



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Start where you are,
and stretch....



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School and School District Expectations

- Expand the rigor of high school courses and establish a college-preparatory curriculum as the default program for all
- Mount college awareness programs and include parents and guardians
- Provide professional development for teachers, counselors, and administrators around admissions and financial aid practices
- Enter into partnerships with higher education institutions to support recruiting fairs, campus visits, and fee waivers
- Monitor progress and voluntarily share data



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College and University Expectations

- Create early outreach programs and new partnerships with schools, including more college fairs, school visits, campus overnights, and other strategies that emphasize the importance of college attendance to high school and middle school students
- Expand “holistic” admissions evaluations, and to the extent possible, commit to waiving application fees for all low-income students
- Establish need-based aid and clear and accurate cost-of-attendance budgets as priorities
- Intensify academic support and encourage degree completion, through activities that provide tutoring, supplemental instruction, study-skills instruction, and the development of learning communities that serve the needs of low-income students
- Monitor progress and voluntarily share data

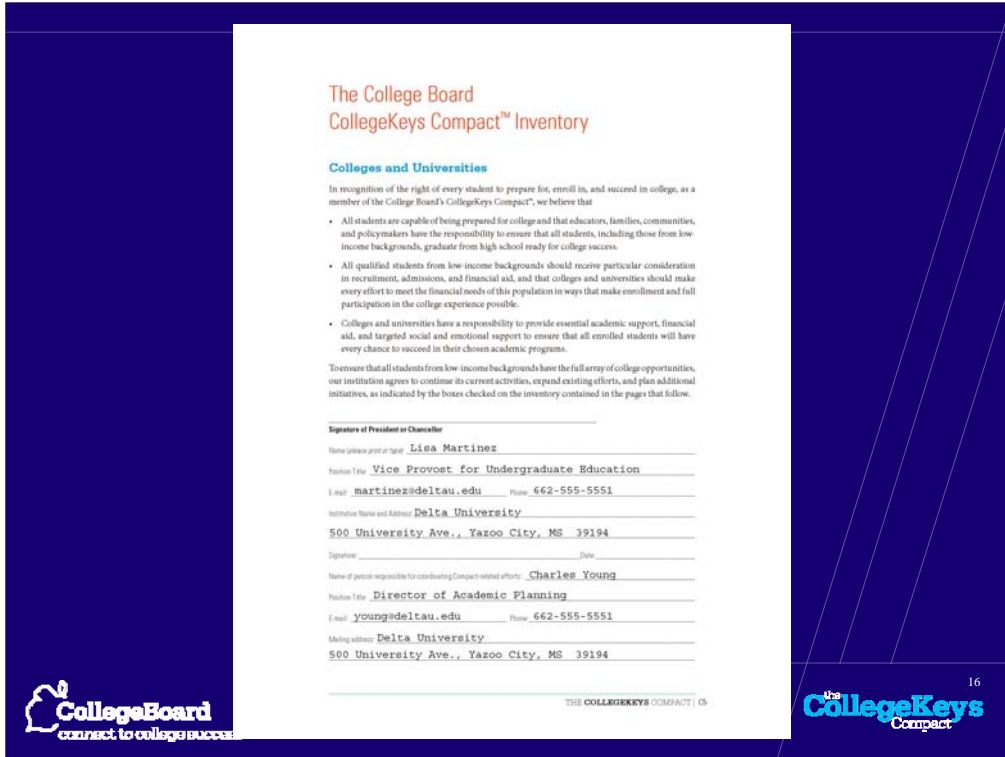


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Other Partners

- State educational agencies
- Non-profit organizations

A number of College Board commissions, councils, and study groups will be asked to participate in getting the partners on board.



To help with that, we have developed an inventory for internal analysis of your institution. This helps to identify strengths and areas where improvements might be made.

CollegeKeys Compact—Inventory for Colleges and Universities

Getting Ready: Preparation	Implemented	In Progress	Planned	Not Applicable
Partnering with school systems and high schools to help them align high school completion standards with the requirements for success after college careers.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Collaborating with school systems to recruit, prepare, and support new teachers to work in targeted schools serving low-income communities.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Providing content area professional development for English (language arts), mathematics, and science teachers.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Partnering with middle and high schools to offer students and their parents/guardians a combination of college and career exploration and counseling activities, including a college assessment (e.g., subject, course, skills, and practices) including admissions and financial aid applications.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Training teachers and counselors on the basics of college planning, admissions, and financial aid.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Providing mentoring that connects and bridge programs to help students make successful transitions to college.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Supporting school efforts to provide academic support for students challenged in college preparatory courses, including tutoring and reading, staff, and study skills development.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other Please describe:				

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CollegeKeys Compact—Inventory for Colleges and Universities

Getting to Admissions and Financial Aid	Implemented	In Progress	Planned	Not Applicable
Expanding efforts to recruit students from low-income backgrounds into the admissions pipeline and	✔			
Establishing fee-waiver programs that cover special one-time or non-recurring expenses such as college admission application and transportation deposits, housing deposits, orientation program fees, etc., for income-eligible students	✔			
Doing greater outreach for non-traditional factors in reviewing admissions applications of students from low-income backgrounds (public addresses missed)		✔		
Adopting specific student expense budgets that include all relevant admission costs	✔			
Reorganizing the internal function that students from low-income backgrounds face when assigning levels of self-help (e.g., required student fees, work-study, or contributions from parent savings)	✔			
Maximizing the full use of students from low-income backgrounds with a combination of grants, work, and loans	✔			
Ensuring the institutional commitment to need-based aid for students from low-income backgrounds, e.g., by		✔		
• dedicating a share of new tuition revenue money each year; or			✔	
• combining a share of auxiliary enterprise profits (e.g., housing/foodservice revenues, or student store revenues); or				✔
• establishing award income from intellectual and real estate fees and legacies to students from low-income backgrounds				✔
Establishing financial aid policies and practices that seek access to foster motivation, engagement, and retention by		✔		
• offering the same proportion of grant aid to transfer students as is awarded to other students		✔		
• recognizing financial aid as a "gateway" applicant status to students from low-income families who miss the self-application deadline the first year			✔	
• implementing a "terminal" type program specifically targeted to students from low-income families to increase the certainty of available aid		✔		
• simplifying and clarifying aid eligibility standards, and	✔			
• providing support to all students from low-income backgrounds who participate in fall trips and study abroad programs, as do their more affluent peers			✔	
Other (Please describe)				

THE COLLEGEKEYS COMPACT | 7

CollegeKeys Compact—Inventory for Colleges and Universities

Setting Through Assessment and Success	Implemented	In Progress	Planned	Not Applicable
Implementing articulation agreements between two- and four-year institutions to ensure that students can achieve a baccalaureate degree without unnecessary duplication of course work.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Providing credit articulation, advisement, and support that allows students' cultural, linguistic, and social backgrounds.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Engaging academic support services (tutoring, writing centers, and learning communities) at first-year college courses, which may include:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
10. Learning	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
10. supplemental instruction, and/or	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
11. using learning communities and similar efforts	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Engaging comprehensive personal and academic support services for at-risk students, which may include:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
10. development of remedial education programs for underserved students.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
10. supplemental instruction.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
11. peer-related academic support for students in introductory "gateway" courses with traditionally high failure rates.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
10. tutoring and mentoring.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
10. academic, career, and personal counseling.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
11. financial literacy instruction and guidance, and/or	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
11. assessments and use of services for students with disabilities	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Implementing an early warning system that actively monitors student performance, intervenes when students experience academic difficulty, and follows up on student progress.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Adopting academic policies that create a path for retention of students eligible to earn credit, subject to "learning contracts" or other commitments to fully utilize campus academic and personal support services.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Adopting financial aid policies and practices focused on students to further student success and improve graduation rates. Examples include:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
10. ensuring that the amount of grant aid is a student's financial need package is sufficient to encourage continued enrollment.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
10. ensuring disclosure of granting "test relief" and equivalent policies.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
11. providing grant funding to ensure access for the lowest-income students who need to receive academic eligibility.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
10. providing short-term loans or supplemental funds for unexpected or essential demands (pending responses to e.g., medical, car repair, learning disabilities testing, etc.) and/or	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
10. creating a "second chance" whereby non-attend or priority funds are used to "top" at-risk student loans, thus ensuring federal student aid eligibility.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other (Please describe):				

As a Compact partner, we agree to monitor our progress in meeting the expectations and share our data and effective practices with the College Board. Attached is a brief (no more than 500-500 words) description of what we plan to do, including identification of partners who might be involved.

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Sample Inventory Descriptive Statement – Colleges

CollegeKeys Compact™ - Inventory for Colleges and Universities Sample Goals Statement

At Delta University we have a growing tradition of enrolling and graduating low-income students from our community, state, and region. Once low-income students are enrolled, the challenges that threaten their retention and success vary greatly but can be addressed through policies and programs that adequately meet the needs of these diverse students. We find that while academic preparedness and financial aid are concerns for most low-income students, personal and academic support services are most helpful to the majority of low-income students at Delta University.

Our level of partnership with the local school districts has allowed us to target cohorts of low-income students with college preparatory coursework during summer months and college-going guidance and support during the academic year. Relationships with high school counselors have allowed various academic departments and our admissions office at Delta to effectively demonstrate that college is a possibility for low-income students with adequate preparation and long- and short-term goal setting.



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We are willing to help with any technical advice necessary.

Sample Inventory- Colleges pg. 2

For low-income prospective applicants outside of our local community, we have made a great effort in revising our admissions application to be friendlier so that students' experiences and background can be most accurately depicted when they apply. That said, on the application we include various ways for students to demonstrate their socioeconomic background, and we accept all fee-waivers signed by a high school guidance counselor.

Admitted students who may need remedial academic work or assistance once they arrive at Delta are referred to our Summer Bridge program and/or our Academic Planning Office. Need-based financial aid at Delta is stringent, but federal and state grants are used to help round out the aid packages, thereby limiting loan debt for low-income students. Bi-monthly workshops on personal finances are targeted specifically to low-income students, and all entering freshman and transfer students are given a book on how to live cheaply while at Delta.



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Sample Inventory – Colleges pg. 3

Our inventory has made it clear that gaps exist in the services we offer low-income students, and Delta has made plans to meet the particular needs of these students. We have restructured our Academic Planning Office to act as a focal point for most of the assistance and the services low-income students will need beginning in their freshman year. Academic Planning now has a formal relationship with the Admissions and Financial Aid Office and a network of specifically selected professors from most academic departments who will act as academic and personal mentors for low-income students. This year's low-income freshmen are the first cohort that will experience our integrated inter-office services aimed at helping these students navigate Delta and gain assistance whenever needed.



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Next Steps for Institutional Strategies

- Collect and share data that demonstrate “what’s working” in the GR/GI/GT categories
- Use College Board Web site to exchange information and ideas with other institutions
- Develop local communication strategies to highlight effective practices and impact on college access for low-income students and their families
- Develop follow up plan for identifying students on success tracks between high school and college or university.



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College access for all low income students is not just a dream, we must make it a reality.



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Questions? Comments?

collegekeys@collegeboard.org

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