

# PARTNERSHIP for COLLEGE COMPLETION



## The Reality

Smart, hard-working, low-income students are not graduating from college. In fact, less than 10% of students from low-income families graduate from college by their mid-20s. This negatively impacts not only the individual students (in terms of limited life opportunities and lower incomes) but also American economic performance, competitiveness, and civic engagement.

Even when children from underserved communities work hard enough and perform well enough to gain admission to college, the barriers to completion remain immense. Among college entrants, students from high-income families are almost four times more likely to finish college than peers from low-income families, and a significant completion gap exists even for students from low income families who have the highest test performance. The factors underlying this college completion gap are complex but understood: lack of rigorous K-12 academic preparation; limited financial understanding, resources, and supports; limited “college knowledge” about what it takes to succeed in college; fewer social supports; higher likelihood of attending institutions with lower completion rates; and less “system savvy” to navigate the inevitable obstacles.

The **Partnership for College Completion (PCC)** is a pioneering effort to demonstrate what it takes at scale to close the college completion gap for students from low-income families. It is an innovative, multi-faceted effort by **UNCF (United Negro College Fund)**, **KIPP (Knowledge is Power Program)** and **CFED (Corporation for Enterprise Development)** that aims to ensure that students matriculate to and graduate from college in increasing numbers by addressing key educational and financial barriers.

## The Innovative New Model

UNCF, KIPP and CFED—each leaders in their respective fields—have developed an ambitious new model for increasing the college completion rates of low-income students:

- UNCF will offer annual, renewable **college scholarships**, help students secure additional grants, and administer the **matched college savings accounts**.
- KIPP will continue to deliver a rigorous K-12 education, supplemented by an increased focus on “**college knowledge**” and **college readiness skills**, including life-skills training and financial education. KIPP will track the **progress and life outcomes of KIPP alumni**, enabled by a robust alumni-tracking platform. KIPP will continue to help students select colleges that are good individual fits, and will develop **targeted partnerships with two- and four-year colleges and universities** with large concentrations of KIPP alumni.
- CFED will lead the **policy and advocacy** work associated with the PCC and will oversee the **evaluation** conducted by academic researchers. CFED will also provide technical expertise in the delivery of the **matched college savings accounts** and in the content development of the **financial education** component.

## The Long-Term Impact

The ultimate goal of the PCC is to create a broadly replicable model that will **increase the six-year college completion rate for low-income and minority youth from underserved communities from less than 10% today to 40% by 2035**. By demonstrating what is possible at scale, PCC will inform and challenge policymakers, K-12 schools, higher education institutions and other critical stakeholders with the objective of stimulating the growth of similar college success initiatives for improving the educational outcomes of low-income and minority students beyond the KIPP network.



## The Program Components and Pilot

The PCC is made up of five program components that specifically address the barriers to college completion among low-income youth:

College Savings Accounts	Incentivized savings accounts used to help finance postsecondary education expenses; opened and seeded with a \$100 initial deposit; savings matched 1:1 up to an annual limit (currently set at \$250/year).
Curriculum	Financial literacy education and college readiness training delivered both in KIPP classrooms and online.
Scholarships	Renewable \$2,500 competitive scholarships and support in identifying other financial assistance to defray costs of attending college.
Alumni Outreach and Tracking	Development and management of an alumni tracking and placement platform; extensions to existing social networks to allow greater connection.
College Partnerships	Dedicated alumni support advisors who would develop partnerships with higher education institutions and support alumni (connecting, convening, helping navigate challenges).

Beginning in fall 2010, the partners will pilot the program over a two-year period in up to 29 KIPP schools in five different geographic regions – Chicago/Gary, San Francisco Bay Area, Houston, Washington, DC and New York City (in Year Two). The post-pilot timeline includes rolling the model out in four waves over 10 years, with opportunities to reflect and refine the model along the way. The goal of the pilot is to test, adjust and create a long-term solution for college success that reaches over 50,000 low-income and minority students annually by 2020.

## The Partners

UNCF, KIPP and CFED came together in 2009 to test innovative solutions and find a way to increase the college completion rates of low-income and minority students. Each organization was working separately on its own strategies: academic preparation and character development, scholarships and savings.

**UNCF** was founded in 1944, and is the nation’s largest and most effective minority education organization, with a successful track record of supporting students’ education and development through scholarships and social support programs, providing operating funds and capacity building assistance to its 39 member HBCUs and serving as a national advocate for education. Annually, UNCF supports over 60,000 students of color, including the Gates Millennium Scholars Program which has a five-year graduation rate of 80%.

**KIPP**, a national network of 99 free, open-enrollment, college-preparatory charter schools, has been preparing students in underserved communities for success in college and life for over 15 years. In addition to rigorous and intensive coursework, KIPP provides pre-college counseling and college placement and support services through its KIPP Through College programs. KIPP serves over 25,000 students – 95% minority and over 80% eligible for free or reduced price lunch.

**CFED**, with 30 years of experience expanding economic opportunity for low- and moderate-income Americans, provides extensive policy and practical expertise on children’s savings accounts and financial education. CFED has been a key national partner in a 10-year demonstration of matched savings accounts for thousands of young account holders in 12 communities.

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