FRONTIER SET

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Q: What is the Frontier Set and where did the name come from?

A: The Frontier Set is a select group of 31 colleges, universities, and state systems, with a group of supporting organizations, all committed to significantly increasing student access and success and eliminating racial/ethnic and socioeconomic disparities in college attainment.

The name "Frontier Set" was chosen to reflect participating institutions' desire to maximize productivity to benefit students and their willingness to explore new and untested approaches toward that end. Additionally, the name acknowledges that these institutions are leaders and work within important larger networks. The Frontier Set is designed to work within and strengthen connection of these networks, rather than displace them.

The Frontier Set is supported by the [Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation](#) through its Postsecondary Success strategy.

Q: Which institutions and university systems are part of the Frontier Set? How were they selected?

A: The Frontier Set includes 29 colleges and universities and two state university systems. The group is a diverse cross-section of higher education that includes research universities, state systems, regional comprehensive institutions, Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), urban serving universities, and Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSIs).

Most of the institutions were selected by our intermediary partners who work closely with their respective Frontier Set members. In the case of our HBCU and state systems, the foundation chose the institutions. In all cases, Frontier Set members were selected based on a track record of improving student outcomes through innovation, as well as for their commitment to continued improvement, transparency about their efforts, and shared learning with other institutions. The 31 members are:

- Arizona State University
- Claflin University (SC)
- CUNY-College of Staten Island (NY)
- Columbia Basin College (WA)
- Davidson County Community College (NC)
- Delaware State University
- Fayetteville State University (NC)
- Florida International University
- Georgia State University
- Guilford Technical Community College (NC)
- Indian River State College (FL)
- Jackson State University (MS)
- Johnson C. Smith University (NC)
- Lorain County Community College (OH)
- Miami-Dade College (FL)
- Morehouse College (GA)
- New Jersey City University
- Northeast Wisconsin Technical College
- Northern Arizona University
- Portland State University (OR)
- Sam Houston State University (TX)
- San Jacinto College (TX)
- Santa Fe College (FL)
- Sinclair Community College (OH)

- Tennessee Board of Regents
- University of Central Florida
- University of North Carolina-Greensboro
- University System of Georgia
- University of Texas Rio Grande Valley
- Wake Technical Community College (NC)
- William Rainey Harper College (IL)

Q. **Which supporting organizations are part of the Frontier Set?**

A: Over a dozen organizations provide support to and engage the Frontier Set. These partners contribute through data collection and analysis, evaluation, policy and advocacy, mentoring and coaching, and packaging and sharing of insights and lessons learned. Supporting organizations include:

- American Association of State Colleges and Universities (AASCU)
- American Institutes for Research (AIR)
- Aspen Institute
- Association of Public and Land-Grant Universities (APLU) - Coalition of Urban Serving Universities
- Coffey Consulting
- Context Partners
- Florida College Access Network
- HCM Strategists
- Hunt Institute for Educational Leadership
- Research for Action
- Southern Educational Foundation
- Tennessee College Access Network
- Tides Foundation
- University Innovation Alliance (UIA)

Q: **Will additional campuses/systems and organizations be invited to join?**

A: While the number and type of supporting organizations may change slightly over time to reflect changing on-the-ground realities, there are currently no plans to add campuses and systems to the Frontier Set.

Q: **What are the required activities for members of the Frontier Set?**

A: Frontier Set members will focus on the following core activities:

- **Implementing and integrating policies and practices associated with significantly increasing student success.** These include improved planning and student advising, increased use of digital learning approaches and tools to address student needs, and redesigned remedial education that represents a way up rather than a way out for students.

- **Strengthening institutions' ability to implement and sustain change.** Experience shows that several environmental factors make a real difference in whether and how change happens. These factors include leadership, strategic finance, technology infrastructure, data analysis, and state/federal policy.

- **Sharing progress, insights, and lessons learned inside and outside the Frontier Set to build additional demand.** Progress within the Frontier Set will draw interest from outside the Frontier Set, which will benefit even more students. The emphasis will be on sharing practical and actionable knowledge focusing not only on the "what" of change but also the "how."

Q: **How long is this initiative scheduled to run?**

A: Frontier Set grants are approximately five years, with the initiative scheduled to run through 2021.

Q: **How is the Frontier Set different from other change-oriented networks in higher education, like Achieving the Dream or the University Innovation Alliance?**

A: The Frontier Set is marked by the diversity of its membership, which spans a broad swath of higher education, and by the commitment of the members to collaborate across sector lines. We believe that this will send a powerful message about the potential for collective action and the transferability of change strategies.

Q: **How are progress and success being measured? How will performance indicators be used?**

A: All Frontier Set institutions are collecting detailed data about performance, efficiency, and equity, aligned to a postsecondary metrics framework proposed by the foundation, with progress and success measured by a variety of key performance indicators (KPIs). Coupled with other evaluation data, these KPIs are being used to understand what is working in what circumstances so we can better understand what contributes to improved graduation rates and progress toward eliminating racial/ethnic and socioeconomic disparities.

Q: **How will participating campuses and systems interact with each other, and with the supporting organizations?**

A: Through this work, the Frontier Set members and supporting organizations will synthesize, share, and exchange progress and insights with institutions inside and outside the Frontier Set.

Q: **Why does the foundation believe that the Frontier Set is needed as a strategy for increasing attainment across the higher education landscape?**

A: Nearly a decade ago, our strategy primarily invested in partners exploring how individual practices and solutions such as developmental education and advising could improve a student's path to completion. We then explored how institutions could reorient themselves around today's learners, reflected through the work of portfolios such as Completion by Design and the Breakthrough Delivery Models.

These early efforts, among others, helped to inform a point of view that has emerged about what institutions can be and how they can transform themselves. It's a view borne out of institutional experience that implementing individual solutions, while beneficial, is not enough. The colleges and universities that are succeeding beyond what the field thought was possible are intentionally implementing multiple solutions, strengthening their capacity to adapt, and consistently focusing on how all these pieces come together to improve overall performance. The Frontier Set is how we will support and learn from such institutions to inform other areas of the Postsecondary Success strategy.