

UNIVERSITY INNOVATION ALLIANCE

2021 Annual Report



LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Dear colleagues,

The University Innovation Alliance was founded on the idea that collaboration is essential to accelerate innovation and ultimately improve equitable outcomes in higher education. The need for such collaboration has never been greater than now, when students, institutions, and our society face unprecedented challenges.

Looking back on 2021, I am so proud of the ways our campuses and network have adapted and persevered. The past two years have highlighted the resilience of our students, the kindness and compassion of our faculty, staff, and administrators, and the brave leadership of our presidents and chancellors. The UIA's work has always helped people see that they aren't alone in struggling with a particular problem and supported them working together to solve complex challenges. We've made tremendous progress as a sector in opening up about our challenges and, despite the distance, seeking allies to overcome them.

In 2022, I see unlimited potential to deepen collaboration, recommit ourselves to successful partnerships, and extend the progress we've made in making our institutions and our sector more student-centered and equitable.



Warmly,
Bridget Burns, Ed.D.
Executive Director

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Bridget Burns". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

IMPACT AND SCALE

Our founding UIA members **officially exceeded** our original goal of **68,000 additional degrees**, set at the White House College Opportunity Summit in 2014. Outcomes from fall 2021 now show even more progress:

- Our founding UIA institutions have now produced over 97,000 additional degrees above baseline projections and are on track to double their 68,000 degree goal by 2025.
- The number of annual UIA graduates who are students of color has increased 85% from 2012-2013 to 2020-2021.
- Annual low-income graduates have increased by 46%, and our total annual graduates have increased 30%.
- Between 2015 and 2020, the percentage of bachelor's graduates who are underrepresented students of color increased by 4% at other public universities of R1 designation, compared to 5% among UIA members.

Achieving our founding degree goal paved the way for a new phase of collaboration with additional partners committed to our mission. The UIA [welcomed](#) its first new member campuses: North Carolina A&T State University and the University of Maryland, Baltimore County. These two institutions have a demonstrated track record of innovation, collaboration, and improving success rates for traditionally underrepresented students.

The UIA aims to expand to a maximum of 20 institutions, with a focus on strengthening the racial/ethnic, socioeconomic, and geographic diversity in our network as we do so.

To further extend our reach, we developed and launched an online toolbox, the [University Innovation Lab](#), to support our members and share curated resources and engagement opportunities with other partners across the sector. Sharing the best templates, tools, resources and materials should make innovation adoption easier and faster.

OUR WORK

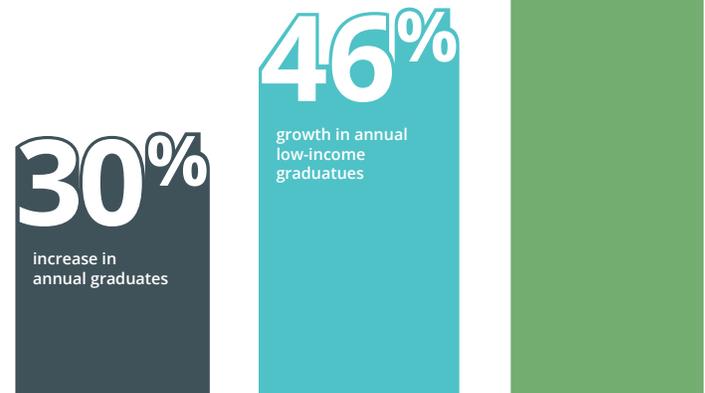
Projects and Partnerships

THE BLACK STUDENT SUCCESS INITIATIVE

The UIA presidents and chancellors in November 2019 added a fifth goal for our work: to eliminate disparities in educational outcomes based on student background characteristics such as race/ethnicity, income, gender, and geography, with specific consideration to the individual demographic context of each institution.

Holding that commitment in mind—and in response to a call to action from our member campuses—the UIA launched an exploratory effort to assess and transform the experiences and outcomes of Black students across the public research universities in our network. **Through the Black Student Success Initiative (BSSI), we are developing a scalable, adaptable process by which any institution can examine and redesign itself to optimize conditions for long-term Black student success.**

8 Years of Dramatic Growth



Annual Bachelor Degree Graduates

	2012 – 2013	2020 – 2021	
All	78,959	→ 102,640	30% increase
Under-represented students of color	15,715	→ 29,067	85% increase
Low-income	22,295	→ 32,587	46% increase

UIA institutions engaged in an intensive assessment process to review data, barriers, and opportunities related to Black student success on their campuses. Through a series of virtual convenings, we brought together institutional leaders to unpack their data, challenges, and priorities. Insights from leading Black scholars grounded our work: we explored requirements for Black student success with [Dr. Shaun Harper](#), learned from [Dr. Leonard Taylor](#) about reconceptualizing Black students' success and becoming Black-serving institutions, and reflected together on the roles of narrative, institutional identity, agency, and data in defining the challenges associated with better serving Black students.

After a year of collaboration and shared learning, UIA institutions have designed and begun to implement new campus-level initiatives to address the barriers to Black student success identified throughout this process.

DOCTORAL RESEARCH FELLOWS PROGRAM

UIA institutions are home to talented faculty and graduate students in many fields that play a role in understanding and advancing student success. **To engage some of these senior and emerging scholars in student success research, the UIA piloted a [Doctoral Research Fellows program in 2020-2021](#).** With support from the Carnegie Corporation of New York, we supported graduate students and faculty advisors conducting student success research using UIA project data.

Campus-led projects focused on proactive advising (Ohio State), completion grants (Michigan State), technology-based student success interventions (Georgia State), and the effectiveness of advising alerts and campaigns (Arizona State). We plan to continue using this model to extend our research capacity and provide opportunities for emerging researchers to apply their skills to the study of student success.

BRIDGING THE GAP FROM EDUCATION TO EMPLOYMENT

The COVID pandemic has dramatically transformed the workforce, likely with indelible effects. Now more than ever, universities need new approaches to supporting career planning and the college-to-career transition. Over the past three years, UIA institutions participated in a college-to-career redesign initiative funded by the Strada Education Network. This effort brought together staff, faculty, students, and employers to co-design and test new approaches to supporting students as they transition to the workforce. Using a scalable design thinking process, campus teams developed and prototyped new approaches to helping students prepare for their next steps after graduation. This project formally concluded in 2021, but campuses have continued to evolve and scale these models. The UIA also developed a [playbook](#) to support others interested in leveraging what we learned through this work.

COMPLETION GRANTS

The UIA concluded its four-year completion grant initiative in spring 2021—after providing more than 5,000 microgrants to low-income students nearing graduation, but facing modest financial hurdles to degree completion. Of these recipients, 83% remained enrolled or graduated within three terms. Over 1,100 students received grants during the initial wave of COVID disruptions in 2020. Through the project, which was funded by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and Ascendium Education Group, the UIA also produced a [public playbook](#), sharing lessons learned and recommendations for institutions considering completion grants.



Scalable experiential learning course to support career planning and increase alignment with campus employment.



Cohort-based professional development program for first-generation Black students.



An eight-week cohort of first-generation students exploring career development, supported by first-gen student interns.



Career Champions faculty professional development program focused on the needs and experiences of students with historically-marginalized identities.



Mentoring Moments program designed to equip faculty with simple methods to engage students in conversations regarding career exploration in and out of the classroom.



Cohort-based paid summer internship with employer-scoped projects and faculty advisors.



NACE Career Readiness Competencies Faculty Champions Program focused on incorporating career competencies into course syllabi and assignments.

Collaborations

Collaboration is what we do! We're particularly excited to highlight two key relationships that have produced substantial learning and change across our network this past year.

FRONTIER SET

Since 2015, the UIA has supported a subset of member institutions participating in the Gates Foundation's [Frontier Set](#)—a group of high-performing, high-potential colleges, universities, state systems, and supporting organizations that are committed to eliminating race/ethnicity and income as predictors of student success by transforming how they operate.

UIA institutions that participated in Frontier Set (Arizona State, Georgia State, and the University of Central Florida) have taken a leading role. They have worked with both the UIA and the broader Frontier Set network to show how innovative course delivery models, use of data and technology, and cross-functional collaboration and organizational redesign can all improve equity in student outcomes and experiences. The Frontier Set's activities came to a close at the end of 2021, but we look forward to sharing more this year about what we've learned in collaboration with our university, intermediary, and Gates Foundation partners.

WE ALL COUNT

Our commitment to eliminating disparities in student outcomes depends on the appropriate use of data when solving challenges related to equity. Last year, we partnered with the [We All Count](#) project for equity in data science to deliver capacity-building support and data equity training to UIA institutions as part of the Black Student Success Initiative. Our landscape analysis work with campuses revealed data limitations, politics, and bias as key factors undermining efforts to address and improve support for Black students. This collaboration will continue to support UIA and member campus efforts to counter bias and racism in project design, data collection and measurement.



Diffusion to the Field

LIVE CONTENT

With the arrival of the COVID pandemic, the UIA leveraged its foundation as a virtual organization and adapted to new ways of engaging the higher ed sector. After producing standalone livestream video content weekly for over two years, in 2020 we began testing a new approach to livestreaming thematic content. We launched several discrete web shows focused on elevating topics and guests that direct the field's attention to issues and values we prioritize: equity, student success, experiences and outcomes for traditionally underserved communities, and diverse leadership. These web shows allow UIA to reach and inspire higher education leaders and practitioners beyond member campuses.

We produced the following livestream shows in 2020-2021:

- [Weekly Wisdom](#): Quick interviews with sitting college presidents and chancellors
- [Scholarship to Practice](#): Interviews with higher education scholars and researchers
- [Innovation Spotlight](#): Short interviews with experts on specific interventions, innovators, and solutions

In response to viewers, we also launched a podcast that made additional use of the content from our livestream interviews. "[Innovating Together](#)" has over 60,000 downloads and is in the top 5% of podcasts globally. It is available on all podcasting apps and our website.

We are particularly excited we could [team up with Inside Higher Ed](#) as a broadcast partner and significantly expand the audience reach across these streams.

NEWSLETTER

2021 also saw the launch of our newsletter. We focus on providing actionable strategies, resources, and tips that others in the field can use to help more low-income students, first-generation students, and students of color graduate from college. We invite you to [share](#) with your networks. We made this for you!

PLAYBOOKS

With the conclusion of several multi-year collaborative projects in 2021, we developed three new public resources based on work testing and scaling new approaches across our institutions:

- [Completion grants playbook](#) based on our 2017-2021 scale project funded by Ascendium Education Group and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation
- [College to career playbook](#) based on our 2018-2021 design thinking project funded by the Strada Education Network
- [Proactive advising playbook](#) based on the UIA's 2016-2020 federally-funded RCT study of proactive advising

OUR NETWORK PARTNERS

UIA Board

The UIA is [governed and led](#) by a group of dynamic and visionary presidents and chancellors who embody our commitment to student success for low-income students and students of color.



**Freeman A.
Hrabowski, III**
UMBC



Alexander Cartwright
University of Central
Florida



Kim A. Wilcox
University of California
Riverside



Mitch Daniels
Purdue University



Rebecca L. Johnson
Oregon State University



Kristina M. Johnson
The Ohio State University



Harold L. Martin Sr.
North Carolina A&T State
University



Samuel L. Stanley Jr.
Michigan State University



Wendy Wintersteen
Iowa State University



M. Brian Blake
Georgia State University



Michael Crow
Arizona State University

OUR NETWORK PARTNERS

UIA Liaisons

[UIA Liaisons](#) are the essential engine driving our work. Their strategic guidance, insight, collaborative efforts, and selfless leadership power the UIA. Liaisons mentor, guide and supervise UIA Fellows, convene campus student success teams, and ensure organizational accountability for their presidents and chancellors.



Yvette Mozie-Ross
UMBC



Katharine H. Cole
UMBC



Tim Letzring
University of Central
Florida



Ryan Goodwin
University of Central
Florida



Jennifer Brown
University of California
Riverside



Heather L. Servaty-Seib
Purdue University



Jenna Rickus
Purdue University



Daniel López-Cevallos
Oregon State University



Clare Creighton
Oregon State University



Anne McDaniel
The Ohio State University



David Graham
The Ohio State University



**Stephanie Luster-
Teasley**
North Carolina A&T State
University



Dawn Nail
North Carolina A&T State
University



Genyne L. Royal
Michigan State University



Kristen Renn
Michigan State University



Matthew Pistilli
Iowa State University



Timothy M. Renick
Georgia State University



Allison Calhoun-Brown
Georgia State University



Rich Stanley
Arizona State University



Sukhwant Jhaj
Arizona State University

OUR NETWORK PARTNERS

UIA Fellows

The [UIA Fellows](#) program has become a premiere early- to mid-career professional development and innovation training program in higher education. Fellows provide strategic innovation capacity to propel our collaborative work. UIA Fellows have gone on to serve in leadership roles on member campuses, to lead national collaboratives, to serve in faculty roles, and to work for research organizations. These leaders are the future of our sector.



**Claudine McLaren
Turner**
University of Central
Florida



Kevin Graham
University of California
Riverside



Nicole Wilson
Purdue University



Brenna Gomez
Oregon State University



Kaity Prieto
The Ohio State University



Chastity D. Gaither
Michigan State University



Sebastian Speer
Iowa State University



Shelby Rogers
Georgia State University



Zhewei Gregory
Georgia State University



Amanda Voigt
Arizona State University

LOOKING AHEAD

The last two years have been challenging for all of us. At the UIA, we've continued to focus on listening to and supporting our members so they, in turn, can support their students. Looking ahead, we are excited to pursue new collaborative efforts emerging from our Black Student Success Initiative, to support academic recovery efforts amid the pandemic, and to elevate and amplify the learner voice. We will continue facilitating the spread of ideas across our network at a time when students need us to work together more than ever.

The UIA will expand to as many as 20 member institutions over the next two years, with a focus on extending the alliance's geographic reach and increasing the diversity of ideas and campus contexts within our network. Two new members will join the alliance early in 2022: Virginia Commonwealth University and the University of Illinois Chicago. We will position each of our member institutions to eliminate disparity by race and income through collaboration and scale of proven innovations. By leveraging insights gleaned from UIA experimentation and innovation, we will create meaningful tools to support the field and galvanize sector change. Together, we can help higher education meet its full potential — so all students can reach theirs.

To support our collaborative work, we've developed the [University Innovation Lab](#) to share tools, resources, and virtual learning opportunities across our network. Recognizing that virtual collaborative space has never been more crucial, we plan to expand Lab access to partners outside the UIA in 2022. The goal is to provide a space for institutions across the country to engage with ideas, learning, and community that can help move our sector toward equitable outcomes for students of all backgrounds.

Thank you for being part of our movement to make higher education truly student-centered. We look forward to sharing what we learn in 2022!

Engage with us

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Thanks to our Partners

The UIA gratefully acknowledges the 2020-2021 philanthropic support that has made so much of our work possible.

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EDUCATION NETWORK

LOOKING AHEAD

Most importantly, thank you to our member institutions for their commitment to the UIA's mission—and thank you to the students who inspire this work every day.

