

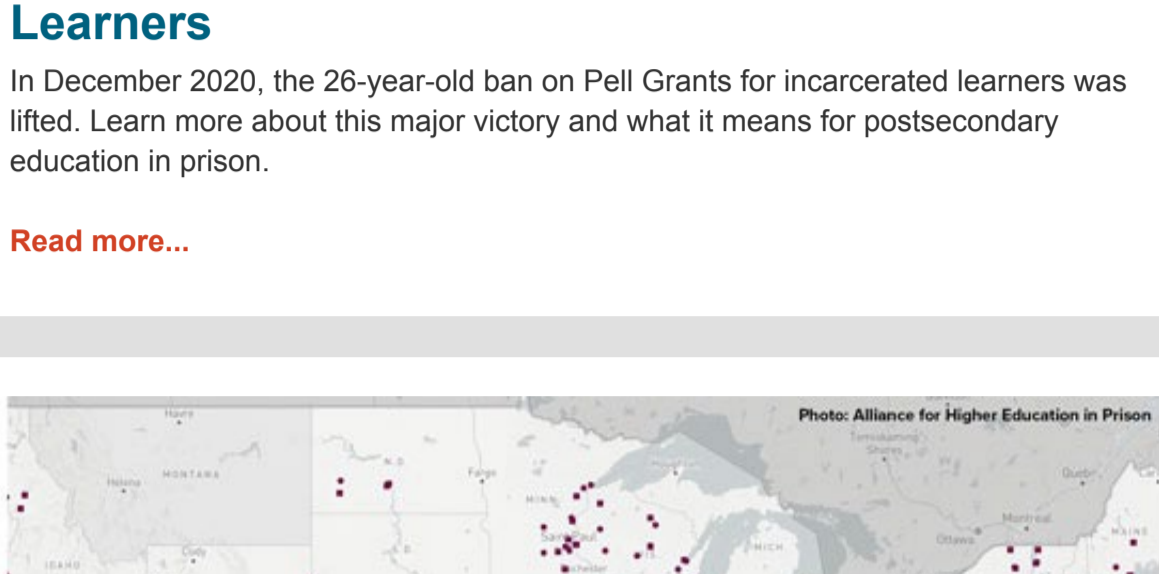


Ascendium Invests \$16.2 Million in Degree Persistence, Health Pathways, Digital Career Growth

Ascendium's Board of Directors has approved funding for 19 new grants totaling more than \$16.2 million. This includes a wide range of efforts aimed at improving education and career outcomes for postsecondary learners from low-income backgrounds, especially first-generation learners, veterans, incarcerated learners, rural community members and learners of color.

Collaborating with co-funders and grant partners, Ascendium is supporting efforts that include: scaling community college persistence and degree completion strategies; creating clear pathways for high-demand health careers; improving alignment between community college programs and industry certifications; preparing incarcerated learners for careers in technology; and exploring micro-credentials and sustainable digital careers for learners from rural communities.

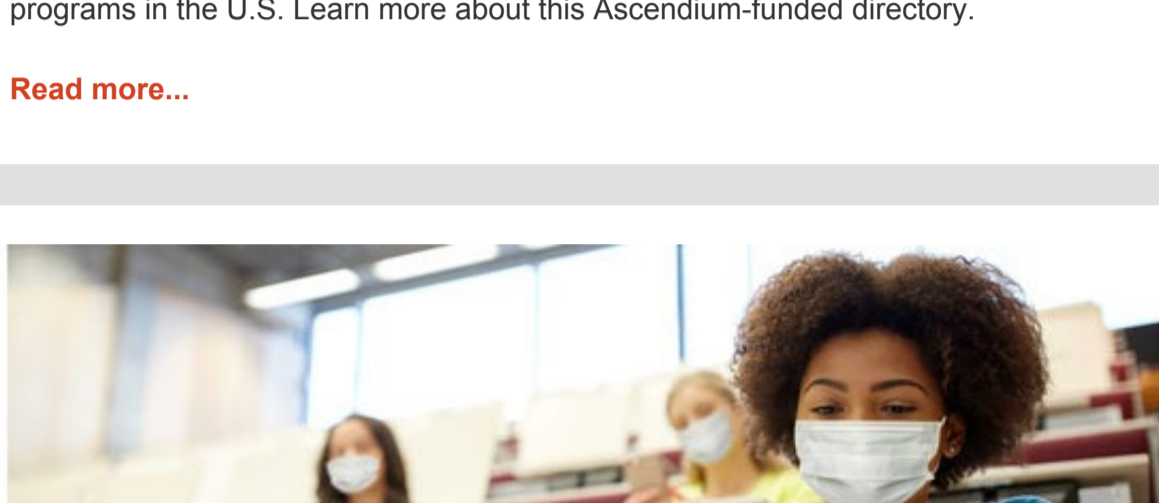
[Read more...](#)



Ban Lifted on Pell Grants for Incarcerated Learners

In December 2020, the 26-year-old ban on Pell Grants for incarcerated learners was lifted. Learn more about this major victory and what it means for postsecondary education in prison.

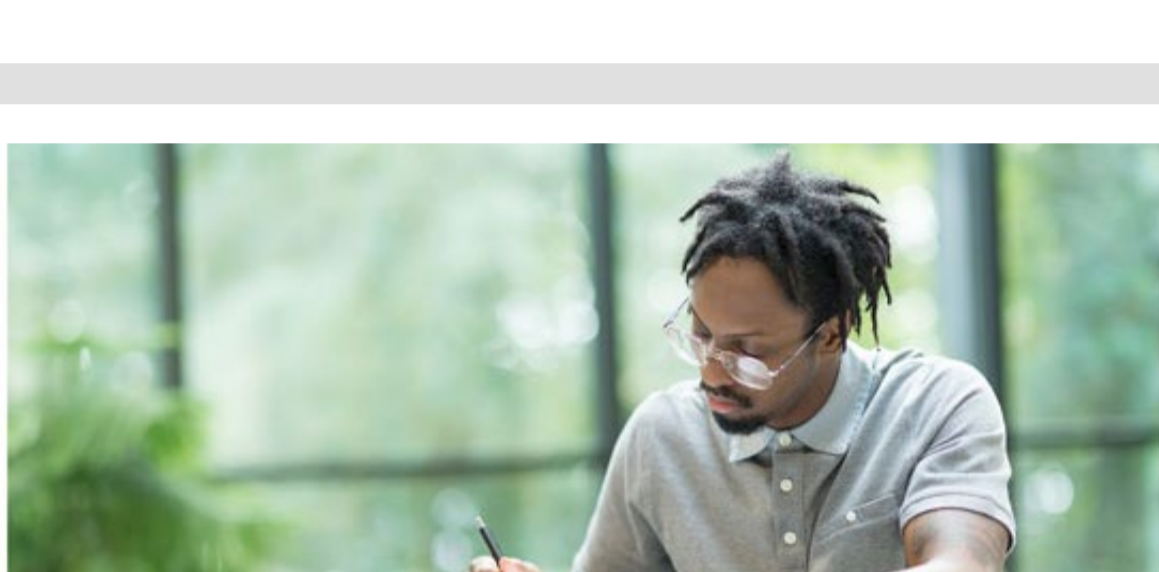
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Groundbreaking New National Directory of Higher Education in Prison Programs Released

The newly released National Directory of Higher Education in Prison Programs from the Alliance for Higher Education in Prison provides the most up-to-date, comprehensive and descriptive overview of postsecondary education in prison programs in the U.S. Learn more about this Ascendium-funded directory.

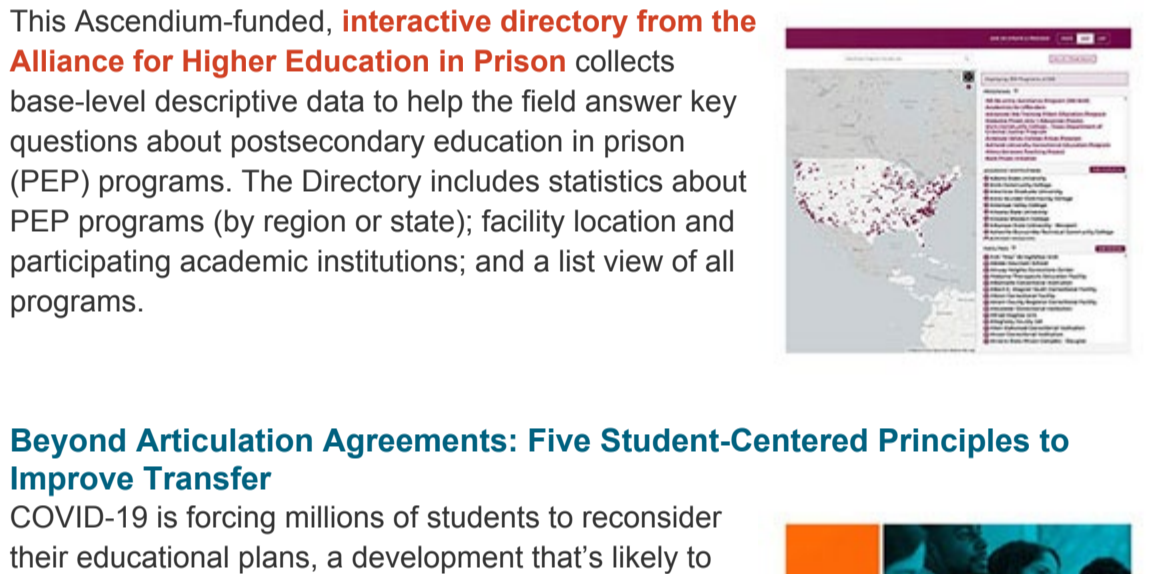
[Read more...](#)



Additional Maintain Momentum Grants Benefit Organizations Serving Learners from Low-Income Backgrounds

Two more organizations recently received grants from Ascendium's \$10 million Maintain Momentum for Student Success Initiative and two previous grantees share how the funds have helped them stay engaged with their members amid the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic.

[Read more...](#)



Clearinghouse Report: Pandemic Hits Black, Hispanic Transfer Students Harder

The COVID-19 pandemic caused student transfers to drop sharply this fall, the largest drop being for Black and Hispanic students, according to the COVID-19 Transfer, Mobility, and Progress Fall 2020 Final Report released by the National Student Clearinghouse Research Center.

[Read more...](#)

New Resources

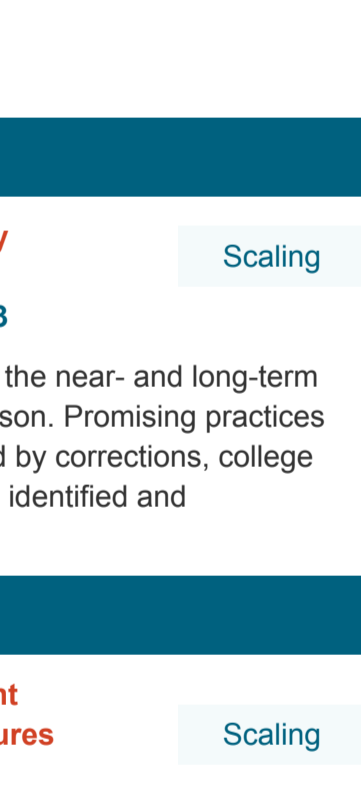
National Directory of Higher Education in Prison Programs

This Ascendium-funded, **interactive directory from the Alliance for Higher Education in Prison** collects base-level descriptive data to help the field answer key questions about postsecondary education in prison (PEP) programs. The Directory includes statistics about PEP programs (by region or state); facility location and participating academic institutions; and a list view of all programs.



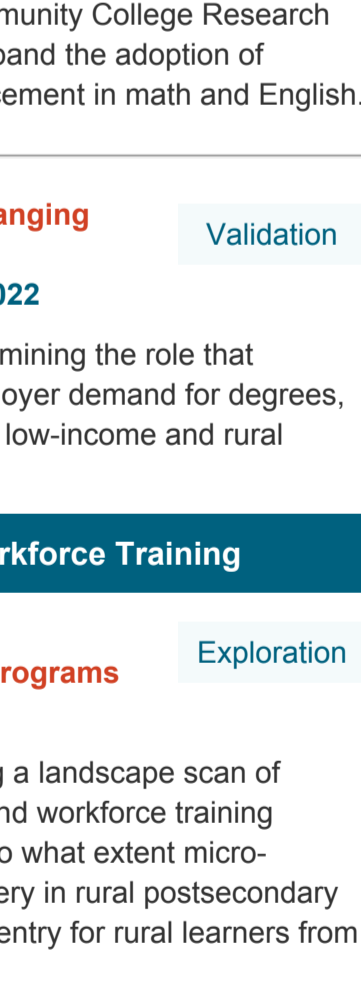
Beyond Articulation Agreements: Five Student-Centered Principles to Improve Transfer

COVID-19 is forcing millions of students to reconsider their educational plans, a development that's likely to increase the number of students transferring among institutions in the years ahead. **This Ascendium-sponsored report from the Aspen Institute** examines new approaches colleges can use with articulation agreements to improve transfer practice and policy.



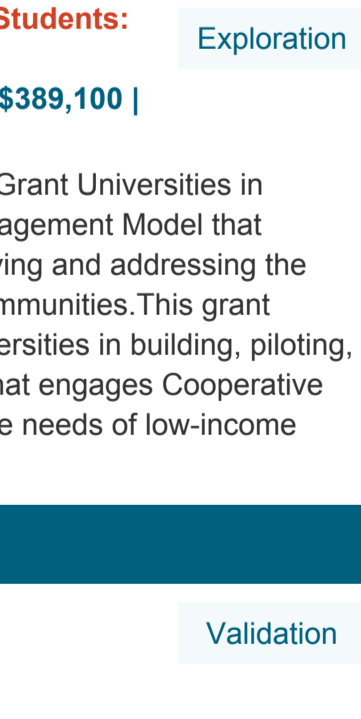
Comprehensive Approaches to Increasing Student Completion in Higher Education: A Survey of the Landscape

This Ascendium-supported **National Bureau of Economic Research paper** describes the challenge of explaining non-completion in the U.S. and a variety of explanations for the high rate of non-completion. This is complemented with an overview of evidence from eight specific college completion interventions designed to increase college completion, and the potential to replicate these programs and deliver them at scale.



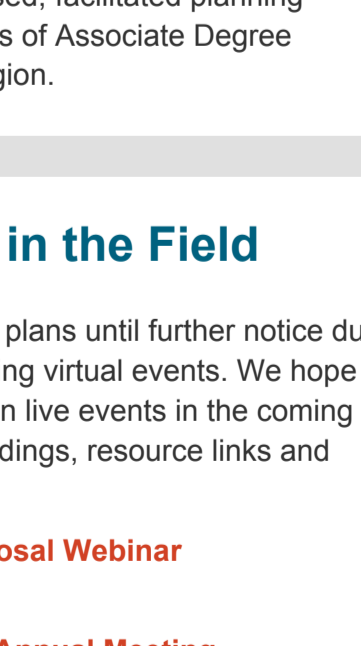
COVID-19 Transfer, Mobility, and Progress Fall 2020 Final Report

As the second in the series, this December 21, 2020 **follow-up report** updates the results from the **COVID-19 Transfer, Mobility and Progress First Look Fall 2020 report** that depicted student mobility as of September 24, 2020. As the fall semester is nearing its end, this Ascendium-sponsored report provides a more complete picture of the fall 2020 student transfer patterns that are attributable to the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic.



Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders in Higher Education: A Rural Pacific Learning Tour

This **Ascendium funded report** lays out findings and insights gleaned from focus groups of students who live in and/or attend college in the U.S.-affiliated Pacific Islands. The information sheds light on how these rural institutions, students and communities have fared – both prior to the global pandemic and now.



Recent Grants

Field Support and Development

Assessing the Pandemic's Impact on Postsecondary Education in Prison Scaling
The RAND Corporation | \$303,592 | 12-2020 - 06-2023

This grant supports the RAND Corporation in assessing the near- and long-term impacts of COVID-19 on postsecondary education in prison. Promising practices and responses to the pandemic that are being employed by corrections, college and universities, and postsecondary practitioners will be identified and disseminated to the field and key stakeholders.

Remove Structural Barriers to Success

Strengthen and Scale Multiple Measures Assessment Implementation Scaling
MDRC | \$2,300,000 | 12-2020 - 12-2024

This grant supports MDRC, in partnership with the Community College Research Center at Teachers College, Columbia University, to expand the adoption of multiple measures assessment systems for student placement in math and English.

Scaling Community College Baccalaureates in a Changing Landscape

New America Foundation | \$300,000 | 12-2020 - 12-2022 Validation

This grant supports the New America Foundation in examining the role that community college baccalaureates play in meeting employer demand for degrees, as well as demand for affordable bachelor's degrees for low-income and rural communities.

Support Rural Postsecondary Education and Workforce Training

Exploring the Role of Micro-credentials in Rural Postsecondary Education and Workforce Training Programs Exploration
Digital Promise Global | \$249,000 | 12-2020 - 12-2021

This grant supports Digital Promise Global in conducting a landscape scan of micro-credential use in rural postsecondary education and workforce training programs. The scan will aim to determine whether and to what extent micro-credentials are being used as a tool for economic recovery in rural postsecondary settings to support credential attainment and workforce entry for rural learners from low-income backgrounds, especially learners of color.

Facilitating Career Pathways for Low-Income Rural Students: Cooperative Extension as a Community Connector

Association of Public and Land-Grant Universities | \$389,100 | 12-2020 - 07-2022 Exploration

This grant supports the Association of Public and Land-Grant Universities in building, piloting, and evaluating a Rural Workforce Engagement Model that engages Cooperative Extension professionals in identifying and addressing the needs of low-income workers and employers in rural communities. This grant supports the Association of Public and Land-Grant Universities in building, piloting, and evaluating a Rural Workforce Engagement Model that engages Cooperative Extension professionals in identifying and addressing the needs of low-income workers and employers in rural communities.

Streamline Key Learner Transitions

The Future of Associates Degree for Transfer in LA Validation
UNITE-LA Inc | \$115,400 | 12-2020 - 12-2021

This grant supports UNITE-LA in convening Los Angeles Community College District and California State University leaders in a focused, facilitated planning process to craft action plans to improve the effectiveness of Associate Degree for Transfer pathways for low-income students in the region.

On the Go: Find Ascendium Staff in the Field

Ascendium Education Group has cancelled all staff travel plans until further notice due to COVID-19 concerns, but we are supporting and attending virtual events. We hope everyone stays safe and we look forward to participating in live events in the coming months. We will continue to share past virtual event recordings, resource links and future opportunities to connect with Ascendium staff.

👉 **Scaling Student Success: A National Policy Proposal Webinar**
 January 21, 2021

👉 **Association of American College & Universities: Annual Meeting**
 January 20-23, 2021

👉 **The Chronicle of Higher Education Virtual Event: "New Models for Rural Colleges"**
 January 27, 2021

👉 **American Association of Community Colleges Workforce Development Institute: Adjusting Through Adversity**
 January 27-28, 2021

👉 **American Association of State Colleges and Universities: Academic Affairs Winter Meeting**
 February 6-8, 2021

👉 **Achieving the Dream: DREAM 2021 Conference**
 February 16-19, 2021

February 17, 2021
 Toya Wall, presenter, "5000 Degrees and Counting: Advancing Upward Mobility and Racial Equity through College Access in Prison"

👉 **National Institute for the Study of Transfer Students**
 February 23-25, 2021

👉 **Grantmakers for Education**
 March 3, 2021
 Danielle Vetter and Kirstin Yeado, presenters, "Supporting Rural Communities: Emerging Lessons Learned and Opportunities for the Future"

👉 **SXSW EDU**
 March 9-11, 2021

👉 **Association of American Colleges & Universities: Conference on Diversity, Equity, and Student Success**
 March 24-26, 2021

👉 = Ascendium is a proud sponsor