

Recent Reports from Three Ascendium-Funded Projects Add to Roadmap for Systemic Change

All of our grant projects are aimed at helping the field better understand policies and practices that can remove systemic obstacles to enable more students from low-income backgrounds to succeed in postsecondary education and workforce training. Three recent reports springing from Ascendium-funded projects are adding to the body of knowledge of what institutions can do to improve their students' chances of success.

Building enhanced services into Promise programs

MDRC has issued a policy brief outlining early lessons from the **College Promise Success Initiative**. The brief, **"Designing for Success,"** explores how Promise programs are building enhanced student services into their models to increase success among students from low-income backgrounds.

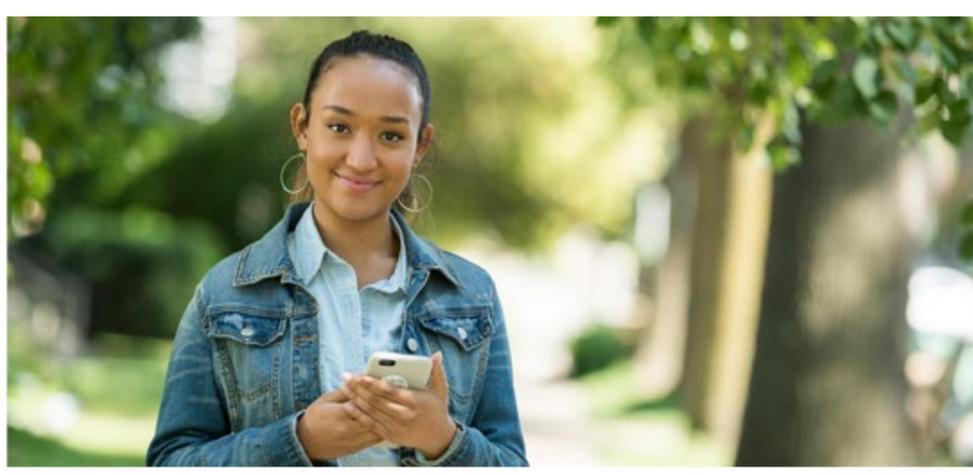
Satisfactory academic progress

The Finish Line: Graduation by Design is a project that explores student behaviors, college policies and institutional practices that prevent students from completing the credits they start, landing many of them on financial aid probation and suppressing completion rates. MDRC recently published a **report detailing their findings** from three colleges in the Minnesota State system and offering six strategies colleges can use to help their students maintain satisfactory academic progress and avoid financial aid probation.

Paid internships

MDRC recently published a **report highlighting findings** from their analysis of Ascendium's **Career Ready Internship (CRI) program** for four-year colleges, which we launched in 2015. The CRI program provided funding and support to 33 institutions in four states to develop quality paid internships for students from low-income backgrounds. The analysis found that colleges were successful in placing underrepresented students into valuable internships, and employers appreciated the program. However, colleges have struggled to sustain the programs after the end of the grant period.

We hope practitioners gain actionable insights from this trio of reports, ultimately leading to broad, meaningful change that benefits students facing barriers to completion.



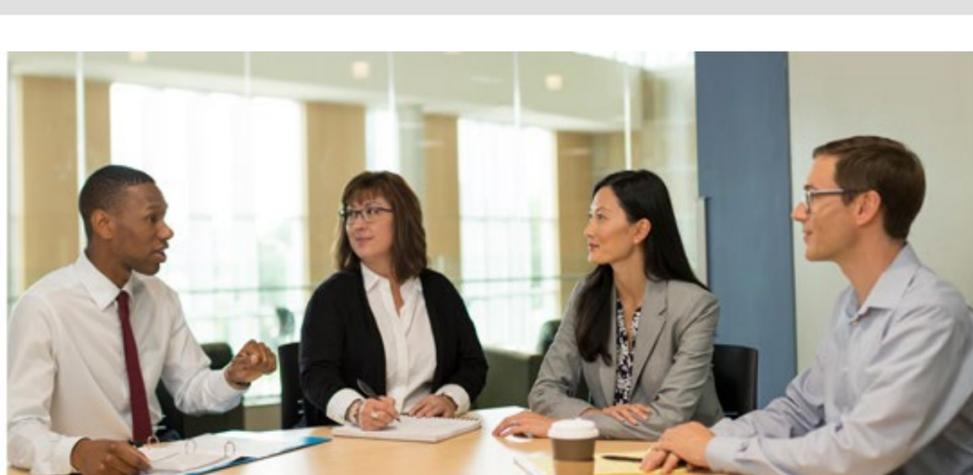
Text Steps Project Helping 13 Wisconsin School Districts "Nudge" Their College-Bound Graduates to Campus with Timely Text Messages

As many as 40% of high school graduates from low-income households who have been accepted into college fail to enroll in the fall. The reason? Students must complete a series of crucial tasks over the summer—such as finalizing financial aid and scheduling orientation—and without the support of the school counselors who helped them get that far, these tasks can be overwhelming. This phenomenon is known as "summer melt."

Last fall, Ascendium launched a \$630,000 grant project aimed at helping 13 Wisconsin public school districts combat summer melt using text messaging. The Text Steps project provides start-up funding and other support districts need to launch text "nudging" programs designed to help students meet critical college deadlines. In addition to technical support from Ascendium based on knowledge gained through our earlier summer melt texting pilot project, districts gain access to a learning community with which to share best practices and strategies for overcoming challenges that arise.

After spending several months preparing for launch, districts started sending text messages to students in June. Counselors coordinating the program say that Text Steps is already making a difference in helping students stay on track. We look forward to seeing the impact of this proven intervention when the Fall semester rolls around.

Visit our website to learn more about **Text Steps** and the 13 school districts participating.



Higher Education in Prison (HEP) Funding Opportunity: Letters of Interest Due August 1

Last month we issued a Request for Concepts directed toward HEP providers interested in partnering with us on our new initiative, "Optimizing Delivery Systems for Higher Education in Prison: Postsecondary Pathways for Re-Entry Transition." The goal of this initiative is not to support the growth or development of individual programs, but to support efforts that can help us—and the field—learn what it takes to build the relationships and infrastructure necessary for systemic improvement that can be replicated and scaled. Please see our **Request for Concepts** for full details and eligibility information. We are accepting letters of interest through 5 p.m. CDT on August 1, 2019.

Also, watch **our website** for FAQs and other material from our July 17 informational webinar for those interested in this funding opportunity.

Recent Grants

Recipient	Grant	Amount
Iowa Department of Education	Guided Pathways Implementation in Iowa Community Colleges	\$1.3 million

On the Go: Find Ascendium Staff in the Field

Wisconsin Technical College System Student Success Summit

July 23-24, Wausau, WI

American Association of State Colleges and Universities Academic Affairs Summer Meeting

July 25-27, Minneapolis, MN

Correctional Education Association Conference and Training Event

July 28-31, Detroit, MI