



SUCCESS

**Supporting Urgent Community College Equity through
Student Services (SUCCESS)**

Submitted to the Massachusetts Legislature
January, 2025

MASSACHUSETTS
Department of
Higher Education

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This report is submitted, pursuant to Chapter 28 of the Acts of 2023, line item 7100-4002, to the Joint Committee on Higher Education and the House and Senate Committees on Ways and Means. It includes details on the progress made on implementing the program, including the target populations and participant demographics, the services provided, the distribution of funds to the community college campuses, and the criteria used to distribute such funds.

LETTER FROM THE COMMISSIONER

Dear Committee Members:

I am pleased to submit this evaluation report to members of the Legislative Committees on the SUCCESS program for FY23.

This report details the progress made in implementing the program, including the criteria used to distribute funds, the approval process for campus use of funds, and the breakout of services offered and spending activity by campus. Also detailed here are the target student populations and actual participant demographics for those served in the program's first two years. Campus programs were scaled up in fiscal years 2021 and 2022, and the first full implementation year was FY2023. During that time, the number of students served by SUCCESS nearly doubled, from 4,415 students in fall 2021 to an estimated 8,657 students in fall 2023.

An evaluation section of the report details the metrics used to evaluate SUCCESS, and we look forward to sharing outcomes in future reports.

On behalf of the Department, the community colleges, and the thousands of students benefitting from SUCCESS, thank you for your support for this program. Questions about this report may be directed to Alex Demou, the Department of Higher Education's Director of Legislative and Trustee Relations at ademou@dhe.mass.edu.

Sincerely,

Noe Ortega
Commissioner of Higher Education

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

SUCCESS was created in fiscal year (FY) 2021 specifically for Massachusetts public community colleges to invest in wraparound supports and services using models proven to strengthen outcomes for students facing systemic barriers. Supports and services are those, such as individualized academic advising, coaching, and mentoring, proven from federal TRIO and similar programs to demonstrably improve student outcomes. SUCCESS is currently focused on serving matriculated, degree and/or certificate-seeking students.



SUCCESS dollars are not meant for experimenting; they fund proven practices that support students who have been historically underserved by higher education. Campuses were asked to identify existing successful practices to grow or adopt. Informed by proven programs like TRIO and CUNY ASAP, each SUCCESS program is somewhat different, depending on the needs of each college's students. What all SUCCESS programs have in common is funding to hire dedicated staff to provide the extra support that underserved students often need (e.g., SUCCESS advisors, coaches, peer mentors). As outlined in the SUCCESS Fund Coordinating Committee Charter, each college's SUCCESS Fund project is expected to do the following:

- i. Expand/scale up existing student support services that are proven effective.
- ii. Serve a specific cohort of students.
- iii. Show significant, demonstrable student success outcome improvement (e.g., retention, graduation, transfer) in the targeted cohort population.

SUCCESS is a highly collaborative effort with oversight and participation currently from the following cross-sectional teams:

- SUCCESS Leadership Team: Meets monthly and includes representatives from the Massachusetts Department of Higher Education (DHE), Massachusetts Association of Community Colleges (MACC), and college leadership. Provides overall stewardship of the initiative.
- SUCCESS Coordinating Committee: Meets monthly and includes representation from the DHE and MACC, and all SUCCESS directors with a focus on identifying lessons learned and supporting best practices as well as tracking program activities and outcomes.
- SUCCESS Program Administrators: Meets monthly and includes representatives from MACC and SUCCESS program staff from all 15 community colleges to provide an opportunity for cross-communication and learning about SUCCESS day-to-day operations.
- SUCCESS Data Professionals Forum (DPF): Meets quarterly and includes representation from the DHE, MACC, IR/IE units, and college SUCCESS program staff. The purpose of the DPF is to strengthen the data and assessment processes tied to the initiative by 1) facilitating communication on technical aspects of working with SUCCESS data (e.g., HEIRS data dictionary field definitions and file submission protocols); 2) forming an opportunity for individuals with focused responsibility for SUCCESS data-related work at each college to weigh in on pertinent issues; 3) creating a space to advance common standards for and highlight institutional research and assessment work on SUCCESS that is taking place at each of the colleges (e.g., analysis of data on college-specific outcomes for SUCCESS); and 4) fostering a support network for discussion of data-related challenges and sharing of best practices and proven strategies.

TARGET POPULATIONS

The legislation that provides the funding for SUCCESS places a special emphasis on supporting minoritized students, economically disadvantaged students, first-generation college students, students with disabilities, and LGBTQIA+ students.

Community Colleges engage those students in a variety of ways. Supports and services are those such as individualized academic advising, coaching, and mentoring, proven from federal TRIO and similar programs to demonstrably improve student outcomes. SUCCESS programs serve both part-time and full-time degree and/or certificate-seeking students. Campus programs and the specific students served may vary based on existing programs already in place, and which students are in critical need of additional services and supports.

Table 1: Populations of students served by SUCCESS during FY23

College	Economically disadvantaged students	First-generation college students	ALANA students	Students with disabilities	LGBTQIA+ students
Berkshire	X	X	X	X	
Bristol	X		X	X	
Bunker Hill			X		
Cape Cod	X	X	X	X	X
Greenfield	X	X	X		
Holyoke	X	X	X	X	X
MassBay	X	X	X	X	X
Massasoit	X	X	X	X	X
Middlesex			X		X
Mt. Wachusett		X	X	X	
North Shore	X	X	X		
Northern Essex	X	X	X		X
Quinsigamond	X	X	X	X	
Roxbury	X	X	X		X
Springfield Tech			X		

PARTICIPANT DEMOGRAPHICS

Table 2: SUCCESS Participant Characteristics

	Unduplicated Participants			
	FY23		FY22	
	N	%	N	%
Total number of students served	8,491		6,359	
Status with SUCCESS during program year				
New to College	6,309	74.3	6,359	100
Continuing in College	2,182	25.7		
Student type at time of entry to the college				
First-time first-year	5,713	67.3	4,627	72.8
Transfer	1,761	20.7	1,214	19.1
Other (e.g., non-degree)	1,017	12	518	8.1
Enrollment status during program year¹				
Full-time	2,893	34.1	2,140	33.7
Part-time	5,598	65.9	4,219	66.3
Gender				
Male	4,048	47.7	3,093	48.6
Female	4,361	51.4	3,214	50.5
Unknown	82	.9	53	.8
Age				
Under 18	373	4.4	258	4.1
18-24	5,143	60.6	3,730	58.7
25 or older	2,973	35	2,370	37.3
Unknown	2	0	1	0
Race/ethnicity				
Hispanic/Latino	2,627	30.9	2,099	33.0
White	2,258	26.6	1,808	28.4
Black/African American	2,210	26	1,447	23.8
Two or more races	337	4	343	5.4
Asian	374	4.4	273	4.3
US nonresident	145	1.7	45	.7
AI/AN and NHPI ²	32	0.4	30	.5
Unknown	508	6	314	4.9

¹ Enrollment status: Follows IPEDS convention for 12-month reporting and is based on attendance status in the “first full term enrolled (i.e., typically the fall or spring terms for academic reporters), even if that status changed during the 12-month period.” IPEDS defines a full-time undergraduate student as one “enrolled for 12 or more semester credits, or 12 or more quarter credits, or 24 or more clock hours a week each term.”

² AI/AN and NHPI = American Indian or Alaska Native and Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander.

There are four additional types of demographic groups that the legislation spotlights. However, due to the specific student populations programs serve and/or student privacy protections, data are not collected and reported at the student level for all campuses. This data shows that SUCCESS served a minimum of the number of students listed in each category of Table 3.

Table 3: Additional SUCCESS Participant Characteristics

	FY2023	FY2022
Economically-disadvantaged	2,919	1714
First-generation college	3,367	1419
Students with disabilities	1,029	417
LGBTQIA+ students ²	42	*

³ All demographic data sourced from HEIRS SUCCESS Fund Initiative data collection for FY23 except for that on students with disabilities and LGBTQIA+ students, for whom, to protect their privacy, data are shared in aggregate by the colleges that serve them through SUCCESS. Reported % LGBTQIA+ students likely much higher but colleges are still evolving their data collection processes.

SERVICES

All colleges offered coaching, student planning, and academic support workshops in FY23 and 80% or more offered case management; academic, transfer, and career advising; mentoring; community events; and financial counseling. Due primarily to some variation in program models across colleges, not every service is offered by every program.

Table 4: SUCCESS Services of College Offerings in FY23

Student Service Across Colleges	#	%
Coaching	15	100%
Student planning	15	100%
Academic support workshops	15	100%
Case Management	14	93%
Academic Advising	14	93%
Career Advising	14	93%
Transfer Advising	13	87%
Peer mentoring or other mentoring	13	87%
Community events	13	87%
Financial counseling	12	80%
Basic needs counseling	11	73%
Counseling (other)	11	73%
Tutoring and/or study groups	11	73%
Assessment/inventory	11	73%
Field trips to 4-yr colleges/universities	10	67%
Affinity groups	10	67%
Discussion groups	10	67%
Publications	10	67%
Scholarship Advising	10	67%
Bridge services	5	33%

Note: "Counseling" includes services like mental health/wellness counseling.

ALLOCATION AND DISTRIBUTION OF FUNDING TO CAMPUSES

The criteria and formula used to distribute funds to the colleges, developed in consultation with the Massachusetts Association of Community College, as per the legislative requirement:

- Recognizes that each of the 15 community colleges in Massachusetts serves a large proportion of students in need of additional support services and therefore should receive some level of funding.
- Reflects the statewide community college funding formula, which provides a common “base” funding level for all colleges, with additional funding based on institutional “equity enrollment” (i.e. % of Pell, African American, and Latinx students).
- Builds off the established “base” funding level from FY22 with increases across most of the colleges to serve additional students (at \$1500 per student) and meet program needs.

Note that for FY23 the full \$14 million allocation went to the colleges. A portion of MACC’s FY22 rollover funded its operating costs for SUCCESS in FY23, with the remaining being redistributed back to the colleges as additional funds (not shown in table below) for SUCCESS services.

Table 5: FY23 Allocation by College

College	FY23 Allocation
Berkshire	\$757,327
Bristol	956,715
Bunker Hill	1,100,205
Cape Cod	755,053
Greenfield	733,682
Holyoke	920,962
MassBay	964,980
Massasoit	995,891
Middlesex	877,409
Mount Wachusett	802,404
North Shore	1,024,668
Northern Essex	1,048,083
Quinsigamond	1,123,851
Roxbury	892,872
Springfield Tech	1,045,899
Total	\$14,000,000

The SUCCESS Fiscal Year Funding Checklist outlines the set of policies for receiving and managing funds, including clarification of related reporting requirements for the initiative. For example, it stresses that “SUCCESS initiatives must serve matriculated, certificate and/or degree-seeking students who meet one or more of the student cohorts named in the enabling legislative language (i.e., students whom our institutions have underserved including, but not limited to, first-generation, minoritized, economically disadvantaged, LGBTQIA+, and students with disabilities)” as stated in chapter 28 of the Acts of 2023, line item 7100-4002. Given the initiative’s focus on providing wraparound supports to certificate and/or degree-seeking students, SUCCESS funds cannot be used to provide financial support for direct expenses (e.g. tuition and fees, book vouchers, etc.) or to serve dual enrollment students. SUCCESS funds *may* be used to fund summer bridge and first-year experience and orientation programs in order to prepare incoming SUCCESS students to matriculate and be set up for college success. The enabling legislation specifically notes, “eligible wraparound support activities shall include, but not be limited to, peer mentors, academic skills workshops, field trips to 4-year schools and targeted academic, career, transfer and scholarship advising; [and] ...for programs or activities during the summer months...” Colleges are expected to submit detailed annual budgets tied to their program activities for approval. Quarterly expenditure reports, which are reviewed by the Leadership Team to determine whether programs are on track, are also required.

CAMPUS SPENDING ACTIVITY

Table 6: FY23 Program Expenditures

Overall, expenditures fell within the spending parameters for FY23 that were agreed upon by the colleges and the SUCCESS leadership team. The guiding parameters were 80% personnel, 12% non-personnel, and 8% indirect. This was a shift from the prior fiscal year where the parameters for personnel and non-personnel were 65% and 27%, respectively. This shift did lead to some issues for colleges as they continue to grapple with pandemic-era hiring challenges.

Expense Category	\$	%
Personnel	\$9,389,231	80
Administrative & Indirect Costs	1,348,847	11
Technology & Equipment	489,789	4
Professional/Operational Services & Payments	295,508	3
Facility/Operation/Education Expenses	221,299	2
Total	\$11,744,674	100

Percentages may not sum to 100% due to rounding. Expenditures reflect spending against FY23 funds and FY22 carryover funds. Summer 2022 spending was reported for FY22 and is not reflected here.

Table 7: FY23 Staffing

The colleges budgeted for nearly 450 positions in total and 84% of positions were filled as of the fiscal year end. Campuses are expected to use the majority of their SUCCESS funds to build capacity by hiring new people. Administratively heavy staffing structures are to be avoided. Focus is on hiring and retaining positions that are directly serving SUCCESS student cohorts and proven to have the greatest impact on persistence, retention, and completion.

Full-time Headcount	Part-time Headcount	Total Headcount	Total FTE	% Peer of Total FTE
142	237 (196 peer)	379	221.0	30%

Note: Peer refers to students employed as mentors, tutors, and coaches

Campuses are asked to be mindful of the proportion of the employees they hire as student workers and keep their percentage of peer staff of the total FTE under 50%. Given the higher success rates of SUCCESS programs at community colleges with a peer staffing structure, those with no peer staffing positions are encouraged to incorporate aspects of this model.

Student employees should be in positions that provide direct academic support services (e.g., peer mentors, supplemental instruction leaders) to SUCCESS-cohorted students. There should also be sufficient non-peer staff oversight by a full-time supervisory staff member. Despite these challenges, the colleges have worked hard during FY24 to shift focus as needed and are largely projected to spend down the entirety of their allocations.

EVALUATION PLAN

Campuses are expected to provide student-record level data on program participation through HEIRS using an established data dictionary framework. In addition, colleges submit a supporting narrative on their prior year annual operations and provide preliminary enrollment figures for their current program year. Finally, data colleges submit via an HEIRS SUCCESS Fund Comparison Group collection is used to develop a matched comparison peer group for evaluation purposes.

Gathered data and evaluation results are shared in a comprehensive annual report each spring. Program administrators, the SUCCESS Leadership Team, and representatives from MACC and DHE review results each year to determine if adjustments are needed to improve the effectiveness of the initiative. The evaluation of SUCCESS is guided by a logic model that documents assumptions, activities, outcomes, and anticipated long-term impacts for the initiative. A 10-year outcomes plan is derived from the logic model. It tracks when and for whom measures of success, including the following, are examined:

- Fall-to-fall retention rates
- Credit/course completion
- Three-year graduation rates
- Student sense of belonging
- Six-year success rates
- Employment outcomes (future addition)