



# Post-Secondary Pathways: Learnings from the Community

Earlier this year, Cradle to Career conducted listening sessions with community members to better understand the barriers to post-secondary pathways as part of the Post-Secondary Change Networks' collaborative action. These sessions included 45 participants, and prioritized the voices of racially and ethnically diverse youth and young adults not currently in a high school or on a post-secondary education pathway, as well as self-identified learners from low socioeconomic backgrounds. Throughout this report, "post-secondary" refers to any education beyond high school/GED completion, including Associate's, Bachelor's, Masters, and non-degree credentials and certifications.

## Pathway Education and Support

*There is a growing need for a "case management" style of post-secondary support.*

The new-majority learners interested in post-secondary pathways have a desire and need for someone to walk them through the complex systems that are at play when going back to school. This is especially true for youth that have not attended school for a period of time. Uncertainty about who to go to for advice when trying to balance a job, a family, or competing priorities poses unique challenges to anyone who is thinking of returning to school. It would be ideal to have someone you know you can ask, "what should I do in this moment?" This model would go beyond the traditional role of an advisor, who typically advises on what courses to take to meet the requirements of a degree or learning goal of the student. A case management role in post-secondary spaces may advise on what to do to challenge a grade, or how to ask for an extension on an assignment. This role may also help the learner access community resources necessary to get their needs met and ensure they are in a space where learning success is possible.

*For those returning to school, peer-support is not always easy to find.*

Often in high school peer groups naturally form. This also occurs in the high school-to-university pathway and is enabled by living on campus, joining Greek or honors societies, and creating a community with classmates. When returning to school, attending a community college class, or trying to create a pathway that is unfamiliar to your current peers, this can be challenging. Youth enrolled at Goodwill's reengagement center expressed a need for meaningful connections with peers that not only had similar backgrounds and experiences, but also had similar goals and aspirations. Myleigha, a Peer Engagement Specialist stated that many who enroll began disengaging from school because their friends did. When someone wants to turn that around, having a place to go to see people like you all striving for something better helps them to stay motivated. The reengagement center provides that when obtaining a secondary credential. If spaces were intentionally created for youth to find each other in a post-secondary institution, it could improve persistence and completion.

# Financial Education and Attainability

## How will you pay for college?

For many people interviewed, this question brought up a large amount of uncertainty. Even those who thought they were eligible for aid or had filled out a FAFSA were not sure how much or how to gain access to school funding. Some participants brought up special circumstances aid such as foster youth or international student aid but were not sure where to go to access these funds.

Additionally, both youth graduating from high school and youth seeking secondary credentials outside of traditional schools seemed opposed to loans in most if not all cases. Some youth stated that when they entered the workforce, they wanted their income to be theirs, while some high school students stated they would only take out a loan if they were completely certain about their post-degree career path. When asked what they would do if only part of their schooling was funded through grants and scholarships, many stated they would quit school until they could afford it on their own.

While important for those seeking post-secondary credentials to receive loan counseling and prevent substantial debt or predatory loan situations, it is also important to note that those who attain a bachelor's degree earn an additional \$1 million more over their lifetime than without a college degree and incur on average \$25,921 in debt.\*\* This can vary from degree to degree, but more tools are available to be critical consumers of postsecondary education.

Education Level Attained	Average per Week	Average Unemployment
No High School/GED	\$520	6.5%
High School/GED	\$712	4.6%
Some College	\$774	4.0%
Associates Degree	\$836	3.4%
Bachelor's Degree	\$1,173	2.5%
Masters Degree	\$1,401	2.2%

It is important to note that while there is a student loan crisis in the United States, there is still an income benefit to obtaining a degree or trade than not obtaining any postsecondary education.

\*<https://www.indeed.com/career-advice/pay-salary/average-salary-with-college-degree-vs-without>

\*\* <https://www.aplu.org/our-work/5-archived-projects/college-costs-tuition-and-financial-aid/public-values/student-debt.html#:~:text=Among%20all%20public%20university%20graduates,debt%20at%20graduation%20is%20%2416%2C300.&text=To%20put%20that%20amount%20of,is%20a%20high%20school%20diploma.>



## Resources for Pathway Support

C2C continues to bring community organizations together to address the challenges illuminated by youth and adults in these listening sessions. We encourage you to look into additional action you can take to improve post-secondary outcomes for our community:

- Explore ways to include the voice and lived experiences of youth, students, and caregivers more intentionally to address barriers faced by marginalized communities.
- Identify ways of sharing information on resources more equitably. i.e., multi-lingual and accessible.
- Visit the C2C Data Dashboard – [www.c2cpima.org/data](http://www.c2cpima.org/data) to learn more about the disparities in post-secondary and other educational outcomes.

Learn more about how to be a part of our collaborative improvement if interested by contacting [dhernandez@unitedwaytucson.org](mailto:dhernandez@unitedwaytucson.org).

For post-secondary pathway support visit the Youth on the Rise Youth Resource Platform.



Visit **yotr.org** for full listing of available resources.