

# 10 Colleges Doing Right By Kids

Students, especially those from low-income backgrounds, need support from the day they enter college all the way through to college graduation day.

Where a student attends college has a huge impact on whether or not they will graduate. So it is important for students to find a college that is the right match for them.

This article features 10 colleges and universities that are leading the way in supporting first-generation and low-income college students. These institutions are large and small, public and private, urban and rural. What they have in common is a deep commitment to providing students with a meaningful college experience, and helping them ultimately make it to graduation day.

## Leading from the Top

### [Lycoming College](#) (*Williamsport, PA*)

Within weeks of assuming the presidency of Lycoming College in 2013, Dr. Kent Trachte set about strengthening the college's support systems to reach more first-generation and low-income students. He has successfully rallied faculty, staff, and stakeholders to support his vision. In just two years, he secured partnerships with KIPP and YES Prep, and with advocacy organizations I'm First and Say Yes to Education. He pursued a partnership with Noble-Pritzker to support undocumented students, and set a goal of enrolling at least 5 additional DREAMer students beyond that partnership. He has also committed to meeting as much of students' demonstrated financial need as possible.

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## Early College Exposure

### [Georgetown University](#) (*Washington, DC*)

Many underserved students have little or no exposure to college before they begin applying. Georgetown University offers [a pre-college summer immersion program](#) for rising seniors from KIPP and Cristo Rey schools. During the 3-week program, students live in dorms and learn the ins and outs of college applications, from researching and identifying "good fit" schools to navigating financial aid. They visit other DC-area colleges, talk to current undergrads about life on campuses, attend college-level classes, and learn how to navigate a college support system. They then leave prepared to apply for, begin and complete their college education, whether at Georgetown or at other schools.

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## Pre-Orientation Summer Programs

### [University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff](#) (*Pine Bluff, AR*)

For first-generation students, entering college can be a challenging transition. The University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff offers the [Learning Institute and Opportunities for New Students \(LIONS\)](#) summer program to help incoming students adjust to college life. Participants move into a residence hall on campus over the summer. During the program, they meet fellow freshmen and UAPB faculty, take English and algebra classes, attend tutoring and academic enrichment sessions, and participate in "College Knowledge"

workshops and seminars. At the end of the program, they attend UAPB's general freshman orientation with a head start.

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## **Financial Aid**

### **[St. Edward's University](#) (Austin, TX)**

College is expensive, and making it more affordable for students can make a huge difference. St. Edward's University has a track record of helping first-generation and low-income students afford college. Through the Munday Scholarship program, current and entering students get 25 percent of their tuition covered. Munday Scholarship recipients also receive academic tutoring, financial mentoring, and transition support to help them ease into campus life. Beyond this scholarship program, St. Edward's works directly with admitted students and their families to plan for the cost of college and secure additional resources.

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## **School Culture**

### **[Franklin & Marshall College](#) (Lancaster, PA)**

At Franklin & Marshall College, the school's entire culture is centered on making sure students from diverse backgrounds are comfortable and supported. Administrators keep up with research on the best ways to support first-generation students, and incorporate those approaches into the programming they design for all students. F&M offers pre-college summer immersion programs for high school students, hosts admissions and financial aid summits for high school juniors, and works with organizations like the Posse Foundation to support students through faculty and student mentorships and weekly campus success workshops. F&M has also committed to meeting 100 percent of demonstrated financial need, and provides housing and transportation for students who can't afford to travel home during winter break.

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## **On-Campus Support Systems**

### **[Dillard University](#) (New Orleans, LA)**

For many first-generation college students, college can feel like a "sink or swim" environment. Dillard University proactively helps first-year students navigate the school's support system. All first-year academic support programs are housed under the Academic Center for Excellence, so that a student only has to go to one place to get help with everything from managing personal challenges to navigating academic struggles. Dillard also assesses incoming students' college preparedness and their individual concerns—like social-emotional issues or affordability—then alerts specific departments that a particular student may need their support. Finally, Dillard places students with similar academic interests in "learning communities," so that they are surrounded by peers who are exploring the same majors and taking the same classes.

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## **Campus Diversity**

### **Pomona College (Claremont, CA)**

When a school's entire student body is diverse, students from underserved backgrounds are more likely to feel at home. Pomona College has one of the country's most diverse campuses, coming in at #4 in the US on college ranking website Niche. Pomona's student body reflects not only racial diversity, but also balanced gender representation and high enrollment of international and out-of-state students. Students admitted to Pomona's class of 2018 come from 46 states and 40 countries, and 46 percent are students of color. Pomona provides robust support systems for its diverse student body, including a Quest Scholars Network chapter, the Draper Center for Community Partnerships, and the IDEAS program for undocumented students.

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## **Building Peer Groups on Campus**

### **University of Pennsylvania (Philadelphia, PA)**

First-generation and low-income college students often benefit from having a peer group on campus. The University of Pennsylvania helps students from similar backgrounds find each other, to foster a smooth transition into college life. In addition to its own freshman orientation programs and college houses—which connect students to all of the university's academic and cultural resources—Penn partners with KIPP, Questbridge, and similar organizations to increase the number of first-generation and low-income students among its diverse student population. Penn's [Equity and Access](#) staff members collaborate with undergraduate advising offices, student financial services, career services, the tutoring center, and the learning resource center to support these students and work with them to create and maintain strong peer groups on campus.

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## **Graduation Rates**

### **Spelman College (Atlanta, GA)**

If a first-generation or low-income student attends a school with high graduation rates for students like them, they're far more likely to graduate themselves. Spelman College boasts a 76 percent six-year average graduation rate—that's the highest graduation rate of any Historically Black College or University (HBCU) in the country. Spelman also enrolls the largest number of black female recipients of the Gates Millennium Scholarship—a program for students with financial need—of any institution in the US. Knowing this, college advisors can encourage students who are interested in HBCUs to consider Spelman a top choice.

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## **Preparation for Life Beyond College**

### **Bennington College (Bennington, VT)**

Through Bennington College's annual [Field Work Term](#), students receive support and guidance to seek out, apply for, and complete internships related to their studies. For nearly two months every winter, students work with an organization or institution of their choosing, anywhere in the world, to apply what they have learned on campus and draw connections between their academic life and their professional work. Bennington students have worked in a wide range of fields during Field Work Term, from doing diversity research for UCLA to completing a literature review at the New York Botanical Garden to testifying before the Vermont legislature on child safety to conducting field research on an endangered bird species in Sri Lanka.

These 10 colleges and universities are doing vital work supporting first-generation and low-income students around the country. KIPP is proud to partner with institutions like these, as well as many other organizations and schools around the country, to help more students get to and through college.