

# Student African American Brotherhood



## National Coalition for College Completion Announces Nationwide Mobilization

*Diverse organizations speak out about need to focus on helping students finish college, not just get in* Washington, D.C. – Today, in response to our nation’s urgent need for more college graduates, a broad coalition of organizations announced the launch of the National Coalition for College Completion. Led by the Institute for Higher Education Policy (IHEP), the coalition is a group of leaders from outside the education space, including business, civil rights, community-based, and student and youth advocacy organizations, ranging from **Student African American Brotherhood (SAAB)**, CEOs for Cities and the Boys and Girls Clubs of America, to the National Urban League and mobilize.org. The Coalition is especially focused on helping more minority and low-income students finish College, as those students are also the fastest growing segments of our society and the populations with the lowest educational attainment.

“Though we as a country have made great strides in helping more students get into college, we aren’t doing enough to help them get out. Our elected officials and education leaders at all levels must do more to increase college completion,” said Michelle Asha Cooper, Ph.D., president of IHEP. “That’s why the Coalition is activating our members and constituents to let everyone know how important college completion is to people outside the education sector, whether ‘completion’ refers to a four-year degree, a two-year degree, or a recognized credential program.”

According to the latest data, *nearly half* of all four-year college students are not graduating. The numbers are even lower for those attending community college. Low rates of completion have a direct and alarming impact on the U.S. economy. Today, 97 million U.S. jobs require high-level skills, but only 45 million Americans currently qualify for such positions. In the coming decade, two-thirds of all new jobs will require some level of college education. Our current workforce does not have the skills to fill these new jobs. IHEP, a leader in shaping higher education policy, convened NCCC to address this growing gap.

“Increasing college degree attainment and economic development are one and the same,” said Bridget Marquis, program director of CEOs for Cities. “There are millions of Americans who started college, but just didn’t finish. And finishing is what counts. Boosting college completion is critical to our economy, our current recovery and future growth.”

Like SAAB, NCCC is pursuing a unique, student-centered approach that recognizes the need for focused programs and policy commitments that can create change for students of today—not the students of 20 or even 10 years ago. For example, more students today work while attending college than ever before. Among those in a four-year college, 45 percent work more than 20 hours per week. The number is even higher among two-year college students, with 60 percent working more than 20 hours per week and more than a quarter working full-time.

Today's students differ in other ways as well, as only 25 percent live on-campus in "traditional" college settings, and nearly a quarter have children and juggle parental duties along with their education. Real change will require making college more affordable to students and aligning college programs with the reality and needs of today's students and the workforce.

Their success in college is relevant to all of us, given the continued growth of populations of color, and the need for a more educated workforce in the future," added Joseph Bishop, Ph.D., education lead for the National Association of Latino Elected and Appointed Officials (NALEO) Educational Fund. "Local, state and federal policymakers, along with college administrators, need to do more to support students. We can do better."

"As a nation, we are not providing students with the support needed to succeed academically while balancing work and family. It's not that students don't want to graduate. It's that our current system isn't doing enough to get students to graduation day," said Ayofemi Kirby, director of strategy and programs for mobilize.org, an organization focused on solving social problems from the perspective of the millennial generation. "It's time to talk about low completion as a systemic problem, not a lack of student motivation."

With the federal government, most states, and many public colleges and universities in the midst of budget crises, this is an essential time to remind lawmakers and higher education leaders that supporting college completion is our best chance to ensure economic recovery over the long-term.

"Starting today, the National Coalition for College Completion is activating our members from coast to coast to reach out to their elected officials and higher education leaders and urge them to do more to support today's students," said Lorelle L. Espinosa, Ph.D., director of policy and strategic initiatives at IHEP and the director of the Coalition. "On the coalition's website, [FinishHigherEd.org](http://FinishHigherEd.org), anyone interested in joining us can find tools and materials to help educate policymakers and education leaders about the importance of helping students get to graduation day."

The newly-launched [FinishHigherEd.org](http://FinishHigherEd.org) is a resource center for policymakers, media, education leaders and anyone interested in speaking out in support of today's students.