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NEW ALLIANCE OF COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES KICKS OFF EFFORT TO EXPAND ACCESS AND OPPORTUNITY FOR 50,000 TALENTED STUDENTS FROM LOWER-INCOME FAMILIES

The Bloomberg Philanthropies Supported American Talent Initiative broadens opportunity for access to excellent education and post-graduate success; commits to attract, enroll, and graduate most qualified students “from every neighborhood” regardless of family income

WASHINGTON, D.C. AND NEW YORK, N.Y. -- (For release at 12:01 a.m., December 13, 2016) -- Thirty of the nation’s most respected colleges and universities today announced a new venture to substantially expand the number of talented low- and moderate-income students at America’s undergraduate institutions with the highest graduation rates. The American Talent Initiative (ATI) brings together a diverse set of public and private institutions united in this common goal with the belief that education is critical to economic vitality and social mobility. These institutions are enhancing their own efforts to recruit and support lower-income students, learn from each other, and contribute to research that will help other colleges and universities expand opportunity.

The American Talent Initiative is supported by Bloomberg Philanthropies and was founded with a national goal of educating 50,000 additional high-achieving, lower-income students at the 270 colleges and universities with the highest graduation rates by 2025. Based on the most recent federal data available, there are around 430,000 lower-income students enrolled at these 270 institutions. In other words, ATI’s goal is to increase and sustain the total number of lower-income students attending these top-performing colleges to about 480,000 by 2025. To reach this ambitious goal, ATI aims to add more top-performing colleges every year to join the 30 founding members (listed below).

“If we’re serious about promoting social mobility in America, we need to ensure that every qualified high school student in the US has an opportunity to attend college. I’m so glad that so many great colleges and universities have stepped up today and committed themselves towards that goal. This is a vital first step towards creating a more meritocratic society,” said Michael R. Bloomberg, founder of Bloomberg Philanthropies and three-term Mayor of New York City.

In the mid-20th century—with the G.I. Bill, the Higher Education Act, and the Civil Rights Act—the nation invested in and opened access to higher education for its citizens, characterizing a college degree as a

path to success. Today, that degree is more critical than ever, and it's incumbent upon educational institutions of all types to ensure that talented students from every part of society have access to an excellent education.

America's top colleges have an important role to play in expanding access and success for low- and moderate-income students. Research shows that when high-achieving, lower-income students attend these institutions, they graduate at higher rates, and access to those institutions provides them with a much greater chance of securing leadership positions throughout their lives. Yet in each high school cohort, there are at least 12,500 lower-income young people with outstanding academic credentials who do not enroll in an institution where at least 70 percent of students graduate.

These students have earned the opportunity these schools offer, but for a variety of reasons—including a lack of information about their options, confusion about costs, and inadequate financial aid offers—many of them simply lack access. The American Talent Initiative supports institutions with the highest graduation rates and best track records for post-graduate success in their efforts to attract, enroll, and graduate those “missing” students. A companion effort to the American Talent Initiative, Bloomberg Philanthropies' CollegePoint advising initiative launched in 2014, focuses on high-quality college and financial advising to help talented lower-income students find and pursue a path to and through colleges where they are most likely to succeed.

Colleges and universities participating in the American Talent Initiative will further the national goal of developing more talent from every American neighborhood by:

- Recruiting students from diverse socio-economic backgrounds through robust outreach;
- Ensuring that admitted lower-income students enroll and are retained through practices that have been shown to be effective;
- Prioritizing need-based financial aid; and
- Minimizing or eliminating gaps in progression and graduation rates between and among students from low-, moderate- and high-income families.

Members will share lessons learned as well as institutional data, annually publishing their aggregate progress toward meeting the national goal of 50,000 additional lower-income students by 2025. The Aspen Institute's College Excellence Program and Ithaka S+R, the two not-for-profit organizations coordinating the initiative, will study the practices that lead to measureable progress and disseminate knowledge to the field through regular publications. The first of these publications, forthcoming on the ATI [website](#), is focused on the strategies employed by five institutions that have demonstrated success in raising or reallocating funds to maintain or increase lower-income student enrollment on their campuses.

Steering Committee member Michael Drake, president of The Ohio State University, noted that “the most admirable qualities of students are found throughout the country. Brilliance. Compassion. Integrity. Commitment. Innovation. Determination. And other traits. The more that we can do to provide opportunities for students with these great attributes – the better off all of us will be, not just in our classrooms and on our campuses, but across the nation and the world.”

Carol Quillen, president of Davidson College and a member of the initiative's Steering Committee, noted that "Talented young people live in every neighborhood and zip code. It serves our national interest to offer these individuals every opportunity to develop to their fullest potential, yet many from less advantaged backgrounds do not believe that college is an option for them. By aggressively seeking out more of these talented young people and supporting them through graduation, ATI partners will immeasurably enrich our campus communities as we enable our country to compete and thrive in an increasingly complex global environment."

"We're calling it the American Talent Initiative because it's all about elevating and supporting remarkable talent," said Daniel Porterfield, the president of Franklin & Marshall College and a member of the Initiative's Steering Committee. "We're investing in the success of low-income students and we know it will pay in dividends. It is in the best interests of all the students in our colleges and our communities for us to work together to achieve ATI's goals."

In joining the American Talent Initiative, each of the founding institutions acknowledged that they "have a role to play in developing America's diverse talent. We are excited by the prospect of what can be achieved if we work together."

"What is so exciting about the commitment being made today is the potential of this alliance to amplify and extend good work already happening," said Josh Wyner, executive director of the Aspen Institute's College Excellence Program. "We know it is possible for individual colleges and universities to admit and graduate more diverse pools of high-achieving students. Vassar has done it. Williams has done it. Franklin & Marshall has done it. And, on the public side, UC-Berkeley and the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill have done it. Working together, Aspen and Ithaca S+R will take what we learn from these and other successful examples so that college and university presidents, faculty and staff can develop even more of the talented students our entire nation needs."

Catharine Bond Hill, Ithaca S+R managing director and former Vassar president, noted that "this Initiative speaks to fairness and equal opportunity for thousands of students who currently can't claim either, and to the enormous societal benefit that comes from nurturing all of our most talented young people. Recent research suggests that at least 12,500 high school seniors per year have SAT scores in the top 10 percent with 3.7 grade point averages or higher – and still do not attend the top 270 colleges. If each of these institutions commits to do its share, an additional 50,000 talented students—12,500 in each grade level—will benefit from the incredible opportunity these colleges and universities offer and that these students have earned."

The American Talent Initiative is guided by a Steering Committee consisting of:

- Ana Mari Cauce, President of the University of Washington
- Michael Drake, President of The Ohio State University
- Christopher Eisgruber, President of Princeton University
- Martin Kurzweil, Director of the Educational Transformation Program at Ithaca S+R
- Daniel Porterfield, President of Franklin & Marshall College

- Carol Quillen, President of Davidson College
- Joshua Wyner, Vice President and Executive Director at the Aspen Institute’s College Excellence Program

Member institutions of the American Talent Initiative (<http://www.americantalentinitiative.org>) are committing substantial resources to attract, enroll, and graduate students at their individual campuses. This initiative is co-managed by the Aspen Institute’s College Excellence Program (www.aspeninstitute.org/college-excellence) and Ithaka S+R (www.sr.ithaka.org) and funded with an initial \$1.7 million, multi-year grant from Bloomberg Philanthropies. Grant funding will be used for best-practice research and dissemination, convenings of college presidents and staff, and data analysis and reporting.

Participating Institutions

Amherst College	Spelman College
Bates College	Stanford University
Davidson College	University of California, Berkeley
Dartmouth College	University of California, Los Angeles
Duke University	University of Maryland, College Park
Franklin & Marshall College	University of Michigan – Ann Arbor
Georgetown University	University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
Georgia Institute of Technology	University of Richmond
Harvard University	University of Texas at Austin
Johns Hopkins University	University of Washington
Lehigh University	Vanderbilt University
The Ohio State University	Vassar College
Pomona College	Washington University in St. Louis
Princeton University	Williams College
Rice University	Yale University

The Aspen Institute's College Excellence Program (www.aspeninstitute.org/college-excellence) aims to advance higher education practices, policies, and leadership that significantly improve student outcomes. The Program is part of The Aspen Institute www.aspeninstitute.org, with a mission to foster leadership based on enduring values and to provide a nonpartisan venue for dealing with critical issues.

Ithaka S+R (www.sr.ithaka.org) is a not-for-profit service that helps the academic community navigate economic and technological change. Its aim is to broaden access to higher education by reducing costs while also improving student outcomes. Ithaka S+R is part of ITHAKA (www.ithaka.org).