



Massachusetts Policy Agenda

While a college degree is the most powerful driver of economic mobility, attaining one is primarily determined by a student's family background and race. Students from low-income backgrounds and students of color are more likely to carry the burden of loan debt and less likely to complete their degrees, exacerbating the racial wealth gap in the state. Informed by the experiences of the high school and college students in our advising programs, uAspire seeks to transform systems of financial aid and higher education to be more equitable, simple, and transparent.

MASSGrant and MASSGrant Plus

The MASSGrant and MASSGrant Plus provide need-based financial aid to undergraduate students who reside in Massachusetts. In 1988 the MASSGrant covered 80% of a public college student's tuition and fees versus 14% in 2021, leaving students struggling to cover college costs, taking on burdensome debt, and working more than the recommended hours for students.

Universal FAFSA

College students must complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) to determine aid eligibility. Completing the FAFSA is linked to increased levels of enrollment and college persistence, but income and racial disparities exist in FAFSA completion. By not completing the FAFSA, Massachusetts students leave \$48,210,738 in financial aid on the table. To ensure equitable access to financial aid, high school seniors should be required to submit the FAFSA with school district support.

Early College

In early college programs, high school students take sequenced career-oriented college classes that earn college credits and reduce the cost and time to earn a degree. Early college students are more likely to graduate on time, enroll, and persist in college. Two-thirds of early college students identify as Black or Latino and over half are from low-income backgrounds. Early college programs must be expanded to serve more students and schools.

Hunger Free Campus

While 37% of public college students are food insecure, with disproportionate impacts on Black and Latinx students, only 20% utilize programs such as SNAP. The Hunger Free Campus Initiative creates a Department of Higher Education grant program to support colleges in ending food insecurity on campuses.