

Fast Track To and Through College Act

Sponsored by Senator Maggie Hassan (D-NH) and Senator Todd Young (R-IN)

Purpose:

The bipartisan Fast Track To and Through College Act seeks to increase rates of college completion and reduce college costs by accelerating time to degree, aligning secondary and postsecondary education, and improving postsecondary credit transfer.

Summary:

Each year, an estimated 850,000 high school students are academically prepared to begin college level coursework.¹ When students demonstrate this proficiency, they should have the option to pursue a “fast track” to college early. Having access to early college opportunities increases college completion rates and can reduce overall college costs.² This bill would create a competitive grant program for states to create a comprehensive early college strategy that aligns secondary and postsecondary course work, improves postsecondary credit transfer, and allows federal Pell Grants to cover dual-enrollment costs for low-income students enrolled in a fast track program under the bill.

States would be given funding priority if they can demonstrate that they have existing policies to encourage early college completion, commit to develop multiple fast track pathways that include career and technical education programs, and prioritize fast track access to historically underrepresented students. Fast track grant funds could be used to develop and expand fast track pathways, cover student costs for obtaining college credit, and to fund faculty professional development and outreach.

States that receive a fast track to college grant would be required to develop:

- High school graduation policies that allow students to complete their secondary course work prior to twelfth grade;
- Advanced Placement, International Baccalaureate, and dual-enrollment credit recognition policies that apply at all in-state public colleges to ensure college-level course work taken in high school counts toward a college degree;
- Credit transfer agreements for introductory college courses that apply at all in-state public colleges to ensure that college credits follow students between institutions; and
- Strategies for increasing equity in access to advanced course work in high school.

Endorsements: AASA, The School Superintendents Association, Advance CTE, All4Ed, Association for Career and Technical Education, Bard Early Colleges, Center for Higher Education Policy and Practice at SNHU, Complete College America, Education Reform Now, Empower Schools, Jobs for the Future, KnowledgeWorks, Linked Learning Alliance, Massachusetts Alliance for Early College, National Association of Secondary School Principals, National Urban League, New Hampshire Learning Initiative, Michigan Association for Computers in Learning, Third Way

¹ <http://edreformnow.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/ERN-AEE-Fast-Track-FINAL.pdf>

² <https://www.air.org/news/press-release/lasting-benefits-and-strong-returns-early-college-high-schools>

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