

What's working across the Cradle to Career Network

Outcome: Postsecondary Completion



Essential Question: Do students attend postsecondary institutions that provide adequate financial aid and are adequately funded to offer a quality educational experience?

Indicator: Access to college and career advising, postsecondary persistence, social capital, inclusive environments, unmet financial need

Impact

Postsecondary completion fuels long-term economic mobility, yet systemic barriers continue to limit who can access that opportunity. In Oakland, the rising cost of college, limited advising capacity and structural challenges within postsecondary systems have long placed degree attainment out of reach for many first-generation and students from low-income households.

Launched in 2016, **Oakland Promise** is a cradle-to-career initiative that ensures every child in Oakland graduates high school with the expectations, resources and skills to complete college and thrive in a career. Through its College Completion program, the partnership supports students' transition into and through college, offering personalized advising, financial aid and mentorship opportunities that foster persistence and success.

Oakland Promise began seeing results quickly. 51% of scholars from the Class of 2017 completed a postsecondary degree within six years, surpassing the national average of 42%. Since then, Oakland Promise has focused on ensuring that students can attend colleges that are both affordable and equipped to provide the support needed for them to complete their degrees.

Through the College Completion program, scholars receive tailored academic, financial and social-emotional supports that promote persistence through graduation. Students have received over \$19 million in scholarships and persistence supports, maintaining an 85–88% first-to-second-year persistence rate — a key measure of stability and institutional fit. These results demonstrate how aligned systems can make college access and completion possible for every student.

Strategies

Oakland Promise's College Completion program focuses on two key strategies that help students persist through college and earn their degrees: financial support and individualized advising and mentorship.

In 2025, Oakland Promise awarded \$5.03 million in scholarships, reducing financial strain and allowing 1,436 students to focus on academic progress. Since its launch, the organization has distributed more than \$19.5 million in scholarships and persistence supports, helping thousands of students stay enrolled and on track to graduate. These investments help ease the cost of tuition and fills critical financial gaps — covering



essentials like housing, transportation and books that often determine whether students can continue their studies.

A second core strategy of Oakland Promise's College Completion program is personalized advising and mentorship, designed to ensure that every student has the relationships and guidance needed to navigate college successfully. Each scholar is paired with a Beyond 12 coach, part of a national organization that supports first-generation college students, who provides individualized guidance on academics, financial aid and career planning. In 2024, more than 1,981 scholars received services, contributing to an 87% first-to-second-year persistence rate. The CREWS (College Retention and Engagement With Support) program builds on this foundation by connecting first-year students with peer mentors who help them navigate campus life and strengthen their sense of belonging, key factors in long-term college completion.

Scaling What Works

Oakland Promise continues to align postsecondary completion, career readiness and economic mobility across the city. Through partnerships with the Peralta

Community College District, Beyond 12 and employers such as Credit Karma, the organization connects academic achievement to professional opportunity. In 2024, these partnerships helped scholars connect classroom learning to real-world experience through paid internships and global opportunities that strengthened leadership and career readiness.

In the 2024–2025 school year, College Completion deepened its reach, supporting 2,511 postsecondary scholars and distributing \$2.75 million in scholarships to expand access and persistence through a growing citywide effort. As participation has grown, Oakland Promise has deepened opportunity, serving a student population that is over 90% students of color and primarily first-generation college-goers.

Looking ahead, the organization is building a shared data infrastructure across K–12 and higher education systems to strengthen accountability and align public and community investments. As Oakland Promise advances toward its 2030 goal of putting 50,000 young people on a path to economic mobility, its college completion strategy remains the foundation, proving that when systems align around opportunity, completion becomes achievable for every student.

Strategies Creating Impact



Advising > Personalized, one-on-one student guidance



Financial Investment > Scholarships that sustain college progress



Peer and Campus Networks > Community connections that build belonging