



***College Success Professional Learning Community Application:***

***Building Student Success Together***

**APPLICATION DUE APRIL 4, 2025**

**Background Information**

The Philadelphia Higher Education Network for Neighborhood Development (PHENND) is a network of over 25 colleges and universities that strengthens service learning, civic engagement, and community partnership in the Greater Philadelphia region connecting academics and community involvement. PHENND's College Success work is focused on the impact of the higher education community and centers equity and student success.

**A Special Opportunity to Work Together in Philadelphia**

PHENND will be serving as a local partner in Bringing Theory to Practice's (BT2P) *Paradigm Project*, a national multi-year initiative focused on systemic change across higher education. BT2P is a national project, headquartered at Elon University, that has funded hundreds of campus initiatives since 2003. Building on that work, their new Paradigm Project's goals are nothing short of transformational:

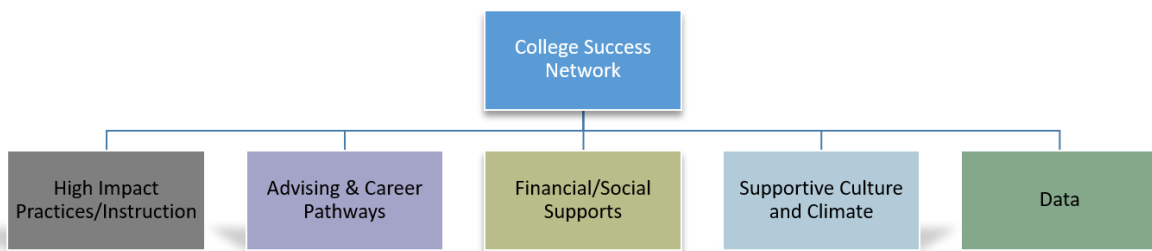
- Advance holistic design of undergraduate education
- Build an effective movement for integrative change
- Shift national conversation about public purposes of higher education

BT2P is excited by PHENND's efforts around college success and has invited us to be one of several "emerging models" working collaboratively with other exemplars on significant areas of educational improvement. Others in the Emerging Model Network include the Bonner Network, College Unbound, ANEW, James Madison University and Georgetown University.

We are focusing our efforts on collaborating with local IHEs, CBOs and school districts around college success for Philadelphia students, especially first-generation students. We're looking to ultimately have four or five institutions commit to working intensively on college success issues both individually and collectively. We envision a long-term, professional learning community model that exists at each participating institution, coupled with opportunities to come together as a whole collective. The work we do locally will contribute to the efforts and learnings of the national initiative.

## College Success Network Background

In 2017, PHENND received \$15,000 from the Commerce Department of the City of Philadelphia to explore a collective impact initiative focused on a regional cradle to career pipeline. During the summer of 2017, with the help of an outside consultant, PHENND held a series of focus groups with area key stakeholders. As a result of knowledge gained from the focus groups, PHENND began to focus first on the college success portion of the larger pipeline. In addition, these focus groups identified five key domains to prioritize in the area of college success: social services, advising & career pathways, high impact teaching & learning, culture & climate, and data.



These five domains have been the focus of our College Success Network activities since then and will provide the framework for the Professional Learning Community (PLC) project.

### How We're Defining Professional Learning Community

There are several definitions of *professional learning community* and several schools of thought about how they are best implemented. At its most reductionist, a professional learning community (PLC) is a method of supporting collaborative learning among professionals within a particular work environment or field.

The purpose of a PLC is to improve skills and knowledge through collaborative study, the sharing of expertise and professional dialogue. The PLC model should enable the campus communities to de-silo information and resources, question the status quo (ask “why” and “why not?”), seek solutions to issues, be reflective spaces that enable continuous improvement and share accountability.

Importantly, alongside this definition we would add that these professional learning communities should dream big and take bold action. You know best what the roadblocks to student success are on your campuses; your work should not only identify them but implement real action to address or alleviate them.

In other words, your College Success Professional Learning Community should ultimately address the following overarching question:

*What would reimagining your campus look like with an eye towards creating real social mobility for low income, first generation college-goers?*

### **Sub-Questions for Consideration**

- How do we ensure more seamless transitions from academic to career advising, while ensuring that students are on track with coursework that leads to a relevant degree which leads to a chosen career pathway?
- How do we connect students to resources and supports to help them deal with “out of classroom” challenges?
- How do we identify, measure and track outcomes for low-income/first gen students on our campus?
- How do we create a more welcoming and culturally aware campus?
- How do we more effectively support under-prepared students on our campus while also interrogating our expectations of what “academically prepared” even means?

Campus PLCs should plan to meet two to three times a semester and the whole initiative will meet at least two times a year. Each PLC should include student-facing staff and at least one representative at the Dean or cabinet level or above. Each PLC is welcome to include representation from the student, alumni and community-based organization communities as they see fit. Ideally, PLCs should include representation from each of the five key domains referenced above; social services, advising & career pathways, high impact teaching & learning, culture & climate, and data.

PHENND will provide staffing support to each professional learning community team as needed and to the initiative as a whole.

### **Our Work So Far**

In our first two years we have been joined by campus teams from Community College of Philadelphia and Temple University. A significant percentage of CCP students transfer to Temple University. To that end, alongside examining obstacles to success on their own campuses, the PLC teams decided to focus initially on ensuring smooth transitions for students during and after the transfer process (piloting their efforts with the Catto Scholarship student population at CCP). Specifically, the institutions have collaborated on:

- creating easier pathways for dual admissions
- developing social programming connecting Catto students to Temple students
- creating regular opportunities for advisors and coaches from both institutions to get to know each other (the first formal Advisors Convening was held in the Spring of 2024)

New campus teams would not be expected to join the transfer work (unless it makes sense for your institution); that information was provided as an example of the kind of work that is taking

place. We look forward to seeing what new ideas, examples and energy your participation will contribute to this initiative!

### **2025 College Success Professional Learning Community Application**

Below please find the College Success PLC application questions. Answers to the application questions are meant to give us a sense of your thinking and are not meant to be exhaustive. Answers to the questions should not exceed three pages total. This work is meant to be built collaboratively, including the application process and application due date. If you have questions, please contact Janine Wright at [jwright126@phennd.org](mailto:jwright126@phennd.org).

**Please submit your application to Janine Wright at [jwright126@phennd.org](mailto:jwright126@phennd.org) no later than Friday, April 4, 2025.** You can copy the questions below and answer them in a Word document, Google doc, or send a PDF. Applicants will be notified shortly thereafter.

**Institution** \_\_\_\_\_

#### **Please respond to the following:**

- 1) Briefly summarize what programs or policies your institution currently has in place to meet the needs of low income, first generation students. Please be sure to mention any policies or programs specific to the five domains described above (financial supports, teaching & learning, advising & career pathways, culture and climate, and data).
- 2) Summarize any thinking or efforts you and/or other PLC members have made toward addressing the primary question and sub-questions listed on page 3.
- 3) What do you hope to gain by participating in this PLC? What do you hope to contribute?

**Lead PLC Contact** (please include this information for additional PLC members as well)

Name

Title

Email

Telephone Number