**Great Lakes FAST Fund Consortium**

 **Advocacy Agenda**

**Background**

The recently-released National Postsecondary Student Aid Survey found that food and housing insecurity are not only prevalent among college students, but that students are *more likely* to experience these basic needs challenges than the general population. Studies show that basic needs insecurity can affect nearly every metric used to evaluate student success, including persistence, academic performance, mental health, perceptions of belongingness, and graduation rates. Today’s college students are more diverse than ever before – yet, the higher education system is still designed to serve the students it did more than a half century ago.

But in addition, these professionals work together with students to create systemic change - impacting the way higher education functions to better serve today’s #RealCollege students.

Built on a foundation of groundbreaking research and rooted in both formal evidence and student/faculty experience and voice, The Great Lakes FAST Fund Consortium is bringing together union professionals, student fellows, and other campus and community collaborators as critical constituents to elevate their perspectives in policy conversations, and create a higher education that better serves today’s #RealCollege students. This advocacy agenda was collaboratively developed to reflect what students and campus professionals have identified as key opportunities for change at their institutions, as well as supports that the system or state could implement to better meet student needs and increase their chances of success. Each campus team is identifying 3-5 priority areas to focus their work that they feel will be most impactful to students on their campus.

**Affordability and Accessibility**

*Campus-Level Practice Changes*

* Expand emergency funding allocated by the institution
* Expand the FAST Fund
* Develop websites to curate and centralize information about basic needs resources on campus

*Institution or System Policy Changes*

* Form a basic needs task force on campus that includes professionals and students
* Develop a basic needs statement for inclusion on all class syllabi, LMS boards, or in-class materials to inform and reduce stigma around basic needs insecurity
* Establish a student review committee that is representative of the student population to provide expertise from their lived experience about the accuracy of COA calculations
* Ensure cost of attendance (COA) calculations are an accurate reflection of the cost of attending their college, with a particular focus on non-tuition and fees lines

*State or Federal Policy Changes*

* Double the Pell grant
* Increasing MAP funding/state emergency aid funding
* Establish tuition-free public higher education

**Food Security**

*Campus-Level Practice Changes*

* Increase accessibility and knowledge of food pantries for students
* Expand type and amount of offerings in food pantry to support needs of student body

*Institution or System Policy Changes*

* Increase funding to address food insecurity
* Utilize FAFSA information to inform students of eligiblity for SNAP benefits

*State or Federal Policy Changes*

* Modify SNAP eligibility criteria, such as enrollment hour requirements, to increase number of students who receive SNAP benefits

**Housing**

*Campus-Level Practice Changes*

* Implementing a college housing assistance program on campus
* Reserve reduced-cost, on-campus housing slots for higher-need students

*Institution or System Policy Changes*

* Establish policy to fill residential gaps during holiday breaks and emergencies so students facing housing insecurity have year-round access to housing
* Partner with local agencies (such as housing authority) and landlords to offer housing vouchers to students who are housing insecure

**Transportation**

*Campus-Level Practice Changes*

* Coordinate free (or discounted) transit pass program(s) with public transit system/local Metro and/or rideshare companies

*Institution or System Policy Changes*

* Establish free, unlimited-ride Metro pass for students who are enrolled at any institution within that partnering system

*State or Federal Policy Changes*

* Subsidize transit fares for college students to broaden access to public transit system

**Child Care**

*Campus-Level Practice Changes*

* Provide a centralized database of information on the full range of child care providers in the community, the hours when care is available, program quality, and costs
* Dedicate a study room or lounge to be child-friendly

*Institution or System Policy Changes*

* Partner with Head Start, a federally funded program, to bring more centers to college campuses

**Physical and Mental Health**

*Campus-Level Practice Changes*

* Maintain and widely promote telehealth services
* Integrate information on campus wellness resources into the broader environment (i.e., course syllabi, academic advising, financial assistance services)
* Co-locate mental health and academic or basic needs services

*Institution or System Policy Changes*

* Require campus professionals to complete education/training on the importance of student mental health and what to do when interacting with a distressed student

*State or Federal Policy Changes*

* Earmark local and federal funding for colleges to develop partnerships with community-based mental health service providers

**Conclusion**

Since our founding, we have been relentless believers in the talent, motivation, and hearts of today’s college students and the people who educate them. We are committed to advocating for the kinds of solutions that help students both today and in the future. And we believe that by leveraging new partnerships at multiple levels of influence, we can transform our higher education systems to better serve today’s students, and to live into our unique national promise that education is the pathway for every American to have an equal chance for success.