



#RealCollege Curriculum Evaluation of Course on Student Parents Request for Proposals

Introduction

Believe in Students (BIS) is committed to supporting college students in overcoming basic needs insecurities. As a national nonprofit, we collaborate with colleges across the country to provide direct resources to students, enabling them to meet their basic needs, focus on their education, and ultimately achieve their academic and career goals. Over the past few years, BIS has distributed more than \$3 million in small-dollar emergency grants to students. Now, we are advancing systemic solutions to transform policies and practices, ensuring better support for today's #RealCollege students. One of our flagship initiatives in this effort is the #RealCollege Curriculum.

The [#RealCollege Curriculum](#) is designed to educate higher education professionals—including faculty, administrators, and student affairs staff—as well as policymakers, on the critical issues facing students in need. This series of virtual, self-paced courses utilizes innovative technology and key evidence to equip users with practical tools to better understand and address basic needs insecurity on college campuses. The forthcoming course on supporting parenting students will be the latest addition to this essential curriculum. **Over the next three years, we will be designing, deploying, and evaluating a course focused on supporting student parents.**

Background and Context

Federal data confirms a long-standing issue: college students face basic needs insecurity at significantly higher rates than the general population. At least 25% of undergraduate students nationwide experience food insecurity, and 8% face homelessness, with students of color and those with children disproportionately affected. A [2024 report](#) by the Institute for Women's Policy Research (IWPR) revealed a lack of financial resources as the main barrier for Black student mothers in pursuit of their educational goals. This included housing instability and insecurity as well as challenges affording necessities, such as food or gas money.

The professionals who aim to support these students often lack the necessary skills and tools to do so. There is a scarcity of professional development opportunities that are flexible, adult-centered, timely, and evidence-based, which is a major barrier to addressing persistent issues undermining student success, such as basic needs insecurity, underutilization of campus services, and students' sense of belonging.

The #RealCollege Curriculum seeks to address these challenges by promoting effective, equitable, and sustainable practices in basic needs supports, student parent supports, and humanistic pedagogy. This learner-centered masterclass, created in collaboration with [Soledad O'Brien Productions](#) and curated by [Dr. Sara Goldrick-Rab](#) and [Dr. Jesse Stommel](#), combines high-quality documentary-style videos with activities and assessments, offering higher education professionals a flexible and cost-effective training solution.

Building on insights from the first seven years of the #RealCollege movement, the curriculum is designed to meet the current demands of higher education professionals. The online platform features e-learning videos, digital resource guides, and individual assessments for performance data analytics.



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Micro-content delivery allows for flexible learning, both asynchronously and synchronously, for individuals and teams. The initial course covers three topics: understanding today's students, the forces shaping their needs, and fostering a culture of care.

Currently, the first course is being piloted at select colleges in California, with plans to expand to additional colleges and university systems by fall 2024. The #RealCollege Curriculum aims to provide various learning pathways to suit the needs of learners and their employers. After completing the first baseline course, learners can take additional courses tailored to their specific areas of work. Although not yet available, a credentialing program is being considered in partnership with professional organizations.

With support from the ECMC Foundation, **Believe in Students will develop and pilot a course focused on supporting parenting students.** This initiative includes three key activities:

1. *Course Development:* Creating a course to educate faculty and staff on techniques for supporting parenting students, providing practical tools to improve student support.
 - Guided by an advisory board of parenting students and representatives from leading organizations (i.e., Aspen Ascend, Generation Hope, Institute for Women's Policy Research, Urban Institute).
 - Featuring well-known educators such as [Stephanie Land](#), selected with the advisory board's input.
 - Including one hour of film content with a completion time target of 60-90 minutes.
2. *Pilot Implementation:* Testing the course at a minimum of five community college or regional public university campuses, likely in target markets of Maryland, California, and Illinois.
3. *Evaluation:* Assessing the pilot to gather usage data, implementation data, knowledge gains, and initial student outcomes.

Purpose of the RFP

This RFP seeks applicants who are skilled in developing well-designed evaluations and have demonstrated a commitment to educational equity. The selected evaluator will develop and analyze participant feedback for the forthcoming course on supporting parenting students. The goal is to leverage these outcomes to strengthen the utility of the course and, ultimately, augment student outcomes.

Relevant Definitions

- **#RealCollege Movement:** A global movement dedicated to addressing the challenges faced by college students. This work focuses on raising awareness about students' real-life experiences and struggles, particularly those from marginalized communities. Key issues include food and housing insecurity, mental health, childcare, and transportation. The goal is to amplify student voices, foster dialogue, and drive systemic change in higher education and public policies.
- **Basic Needs Security:** Access to nutritious and sufficient food; safe, secure, and adequate housing for sleeping, studying, cooking, and showering; healthcare for mental and physical well-



being; affordable technology and transportation; resources for personal hygiene; and childcare and related needs.

- **Basic Needs Insecurity (BNI):** A structural characteristic affecting students, indicating a lack of an ecosystem to ensure that students' basic needs are met.

Scope of Work

The selected evaluator will be responsible for the following:

1. Data Collection and Analysis:

- Course Usage Data: Track and analyze how faculty and staff interact with the course. This might include monitoring user engagement, such as login frequency, time spent on the course, and module completion rates.
- Implementation Data: Gather information on how the course was implemented across different campuses. This includes collecting feedback from faculty and staff through surveys and interviews to understand the course's usability, relevance, and integration into existing professional development programs.
- Knowledge Gains: Assess changes in knowledge and attitudes toward supporting parenting students by using pre- and post-course assessments, short learning assessments before and after each module, and possibly interviews and focus groups.
- Student Outcomes: Evaluate the impact of the course on student parents themselves by conducting surveys and focus groups to understand their experiences with faculty and staff. Additionally, analyze de-identified student-level data provided by participating colleges to track changes in retention rates, academic performance, and use of support services before and after course implementation.

2. Interim and Final Reports:

- Provide regular updates on the progress of data collection and analysis. Prepare interim reports summarizing early findings and a comprehensive final report detailing the outcomes of the evaluation, including recommendations for improving the course and its impact on users as well as student parents.

Note: The following, including estimated sample sizes, are provided as a general guide. Actual numbers may vary as the project progresses:

- All participating colleges will be required to sign a data sharing agreement to provide de-identified student-level data, and to allow the evaluator to conduct faculty and student surveys, interviews, and/or focus groups. These activities will be conducted in alignment with the evaluation design and Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval. The evaluator will be responsible for facilitating this process with partner colleges.
- Institutions will assist in identifying student parents who can help assess the level of support and belongingness they experience on campus. Evaluators will gather data through broad-response surveys, aiming for 80-100 responses per institution. Additionally,



evaluators will conduct focus groups and/or interviews with 4-5 student parents per campus to obtain a more nuanced understanding of how campus supports influence their experience.

Proposal Submission Requirements

Proposals should address the following elements:

- **Objectives:** Clearly define the goals of the evaluation project.
- **Methodology:** Describe the methods and tools to be used for assessments and analysis.
- **Context:** Provide an understanding of the higher education environment and the challenges faced by parenting students.
- **Timeline and Project Plan:** Outline the project schedule, including key milestones and deadlines.
- **Budget:** Share a comprehensive budget proposal that encompasses costs for each phase of the project. Our available funding for this project ranges from \$75,000 to \$100,000, allowing for flexible planning and resource allocation.
- **Project Team Biographies:** Include brief biographies of team members, highlighting relevant experience and expertise.
- **Work Sample:** Provide a relevant work sample that demonstrates your ability to conduct a similar evaluation or project. The sample should reflect your expertise in educational evaluation and your commitment to educational equity.

Participation and Eligibility

This RFP is open to individuals (including consulting organizations) with demonstrated expertise in educational evaluation, assessment design, and a commitment to educational equity. We will give priority to applicants who have demonstrated cultural competence and experience working with diverse faculty and student populations, particularly those similar to the communities engaged in this project.

Proposal Review and Selection

Proposals will be reviewed based on their relevance, feasibility, methodology, and alignment with the mission of BIS and the goals of the #RealCollege Curriculum.

Submission Instructions

All proposals should be submitted via email to Dr. Gralon Johnson, Director of Program Strategy and Services, at gjohnson@believeinstudents.org.

Engagement Duration

We anticipate that the evaluator will be engaged from September 2024 to May 2027.

Timeline (High-Level)

Key dates for this project include:

- **September 13, 2024:** Proposal submission deadline
- **Late September 2024:** Evaluator selected; engagement begins



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- **Mid-October 2024 - December 2024:** Development and preparation phase
 - **January 2025 - May 2025:** Course deployment phase 1 (baseline data collection, course rollout with Cohort 1).
 - **June 2025 - December 2025:** Expansion phase (course deployment with Cohort 1 and Cohort 2, survey administration).
 - **January 2026 - May 2026:** Expanded deployment and data collection (recruit Cohort 3, review initial evaluation findings).
 - **June 2026 - December 2026:** Ongoing deployment and evaluation (review impact on systems change and student outcomes).
 - **January 2027 - May 2027:** Final data collection and analysis, report production and dissemination.

Contact Information: For any questions regarding the RFP process, the #RealCollege Curriculum, or Believe in Students, please contact Dr. Gralon Johnson at gjohnson@believeinstudents.org. We look forward to receiving your proposals and partnering to create a more equitable educational environment for parenting students!