

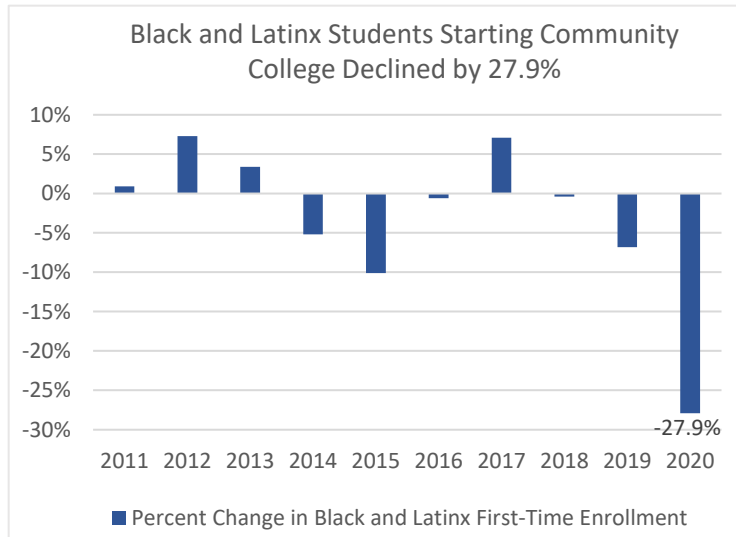


# Investing in Student Success: The Road to Economic Prosperity Is Built with Equity

## THE CHALLENGE: IN THE PANDEMIC HISTORIC BARRIERS TO SUCCESS LOOM LARGER THAN EVER

Community College enrollment has been declining overall for years, and during the pandemic it dropped sharply for Black and Latinx students, [falling by 27.9%](#).

In addition to demographic trends, lack of affordability can be a major obstacle that limits enrollment and completion. Financial aid often covers only tuition and fees — which are

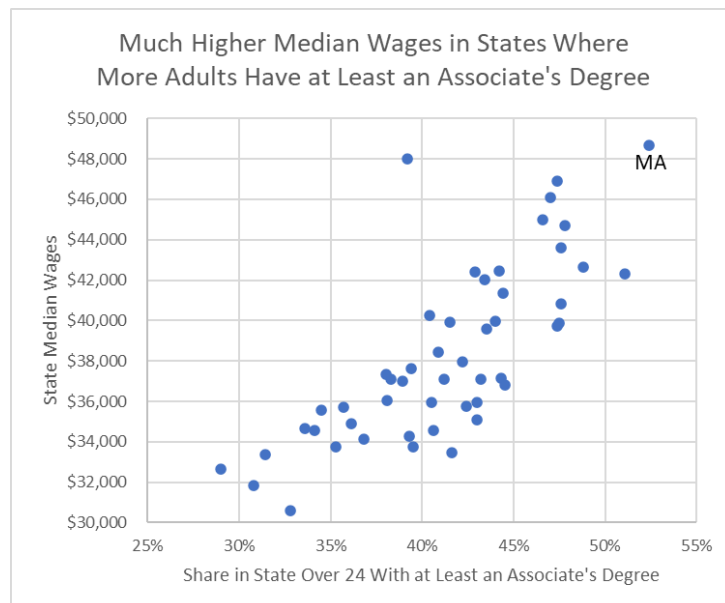


[generally just 25 percent of the cost of attendance](#) for community college students nationally. Lower-income students often need to pay for housing, childcare, food and other necessities. As a result, they often need to work long hours, making completion harder, and take on substantial debt. Losing a job or experiencing reduced employment hours can cause students to drop out.

## BARRIERS TO EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITY THREATEN OUR ECONOMY

Building a strong high-wage economy depends on having a well-educated workforce. Across the country, the highest-wage state economies are those where the most residents have at least a two-year college degree.

Massachusetts has the largest share of the workforce with a college degree — and the highest median wage. To broaden that prosperity, we need to expand access to college for all people and attack racial opportunity gaps. We are in danger of doing the opposite if we can't reverse enrollment declines and provide every student the supports they need to graduate.



## THE SOLUTION: INCREASE FINANCIAL AID AND THE SUPPORTS STUDENTS NEED TO SUCCEED

- ▶ Increase Aid to Expand Access: \$26 Million for Scholarships and \$6 Million for Debt Relief  
With federal funds from the *American Rescue Plan Act* and increased state funds, Massachusetts can move closer to the goal of providing all students [with enough financial aid so that they can afford the full cost of attendance](#) (tuition, fees, books and living expenses) without going into debt. And by offering debt relief for graduates who go to work in the state's public schools, we can help those graduates and diversify our education workforce by attracting candidates of color who, because of racial wealth gaps, [often have to take on more debt](#).
  
- ▶ Provide Supports Students Need to Succeed: \$14 Million Increase for the SUCCESS Program  
In FY21, the Legislature funded a new program to help community colleges provide “supports to increase attainment, particularly among students of color.” The Board of Higher Education [describes](#) the program as potentially an essential component of the its [Equity Agenda](#) for years to come. It includes “investing in culturally sustainable wraparound support services, such as peer mentoring, academic skills workshops, transportation stipends, (and) dependent care supports, as well as targeted academic, career, transfer, and scholarship advising.”  
This program builds on the lessons from the Accelerated Study in Associate Programs (ASAP) at the City University of New York. That initiative has proven [to increase college completion significantly](#), graduating ASAP students at more than double the rates of other students.
  - Students who started ASAP with developmental needs graduated at high rates.
  - Students from underrepresented groups appear to benefit more from ASAP than others.The ASAP program provides a more comprehensive set of supports than the existing SUCCESS program. With additional state funding and new federal funds, our state program could be strengthened to provide all of the supports and resources that students need to overcome barriers and succeed. [A careful evaluation of ASAP](#) found: “Because the program generated so many more graduates than the usual college services, the cost per degree was lower despite the substantial investment required to operate the program.”
  
- ▶ Increase [Campus Funding and Improve Wages and Benefits for Adjunct Faculty](#): \$90 Million  
To succeed, students need the full range of faculty and staff resources to help them to thrive. Most teaching at community colleges is done by adjunct faculty who are often forced to carry very heavy teaching loads across several campuses because of low wages and limited access to essential benefits such as health care and pensions. Pay equity and fair benefits for adjuncts will improve their ability to meet the needs of students.

*The Massachusetts Teachers Association/NEA represents 18,000 faculty and staff in community colleges, state universities and UMass — and 117,000 educators statewide. The MTA is working for passage of legislation to reinvest in public higher education to ensure adequate and equitable funding for the success of all students.*