

Fast Track To and Through College Act (S.2736)

Sponsored by U.S. Senators Maggie Hassan (D-NH) and Todd Young (R-IN)



By the end of *junior year*, one in four high school students meet all four ACT® College Readiness Benchmarks. Each year, an estimated 850,000 students are prepared for a faster, cheaper path to and through college. Nearly one-third of students who are academically ready for college early come from low-income families. Among those students, one-quarter are Black, Latinx, and/or Native American.

When students demonstrate college readiness, they should have a meaningful opportunity to “Fast Track” into college-level course work on a full-time basis without financial barriers that could prevent them from pursuing an expedited path to a degree. The **Fast Track To and Through College Act** aims to increase college completion and reduce college costs by redesigning the senior year of high school for academically prepared students, aligning secondary and postsecondary course work, improving postsecondary credit transfer, and allowing federal Pell Grants to cover dual-enrollment costs for eligible students.

Grants to State–School District–College Partnerships

The Fast Track To and Through College Act authorizes competitive grants to states that have or will develop

- statewide high school graduation policies that allow students to complete their secondary course work prior to senior year;
- statewide Advanced Placement (AP), International Baccalaureate (IB), and dual-enrollment credit recognition policies that apply at all in-state public colleges to ensure college-level course work taken in high school counts toward a college degree;
- statewide credit transfer agreements for introductory college courses that apply at all in-state public colleges to ensure college credits follow students between institutions;
- statewide strategies for increasing equity in access to advanced course work in high school; and
- guarantees that ensure that by the end of the grant period all college-ready students in all school districts have access to two “Fast Track” pathway options:

- (1) an **early college “Fast Track” pathway** consisting of a full-time load of introductory college-level course work during senior year of high school offered free of charge through AP, IB, dual-enrollment, or online programs such as edX or
- (2) an **early high school graduation “Fast Track” pathway** where students receive an early high school graduation scholarship for use at any in-state public college when they graduate high school in three years instead of four. (See the illustration on the next page.)

Priorities to Determine Awards

The Fast Track To and Through College Act prioritizes funds to states that

- already have adopted policies to better align their K–12 and higher education systems;
- commit to develop multiple “Fast Track” pathways, including those that integrate career and technical education and work-based learning aligned with high-wage, in-demand jobs; and
- propose to expand access to “Fast Track” pathways and advanced course work in districts serving a high number or percentage of historically underrepresented students.

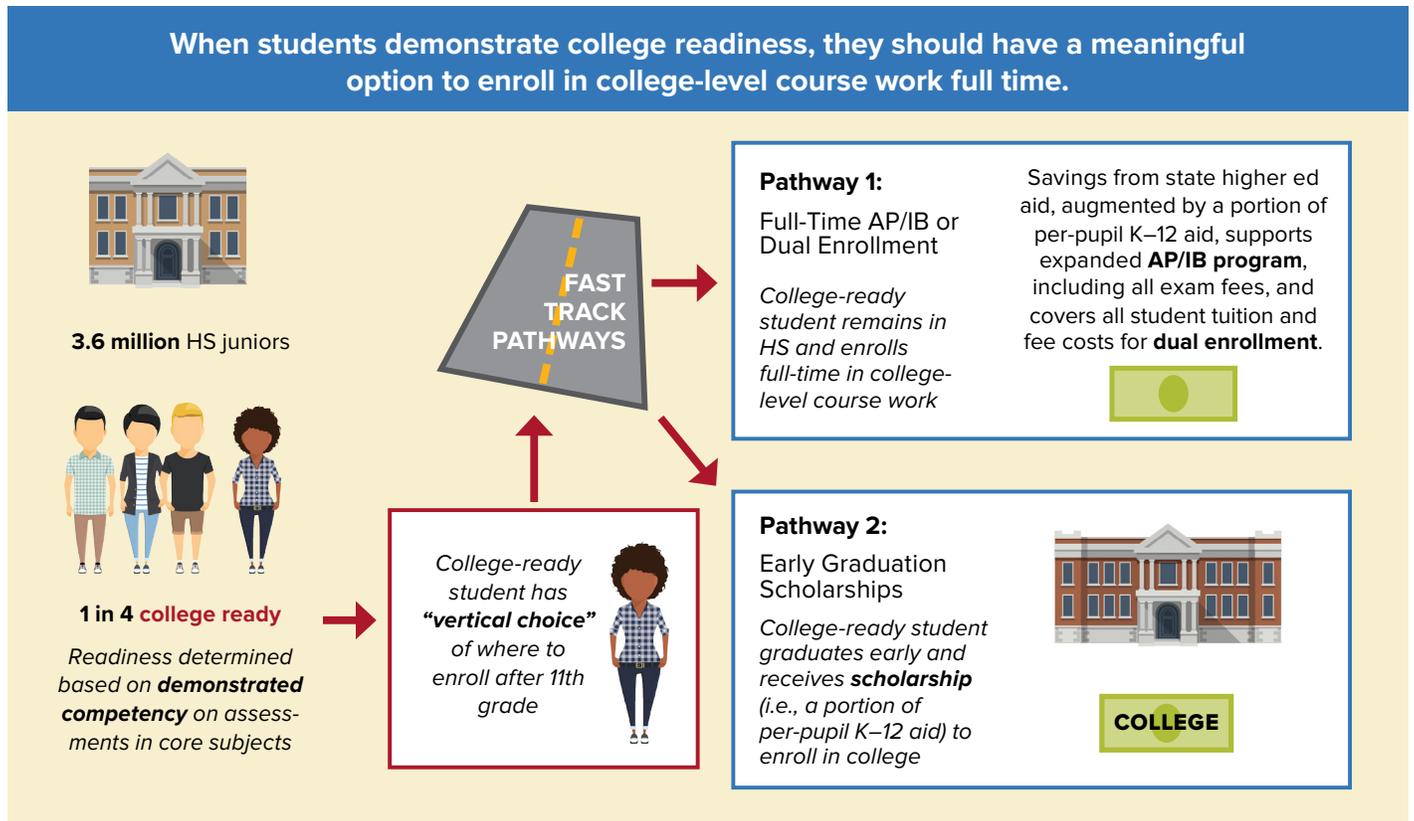
Use of Funds

Grant funds will be awarded to partnerships of state K–12 education agencies, public higher education systems, and school districts to implement programs and activities that improve student preparation for, and participation in, accelerated academic work. States can use funds to

- expand AP, IB, and dual-enrollment courses for “Fast Track” and non-“Fast Track” students;
- offset fees for AP, IB, College Learning Examination Program (CLEP), and similar tests for all “Fast Track” students;
- provide professional development for AP, IB, and dual-enrollment instructors; and
- reach out to students, particularly historically underrepresented students, and parents to build awareness of “Fast Track” pathways.

Pell Grant Eligibility

High school students from low-income families who meet their state's academic requirements to participate in an early college "Fast Track" pathway will gain access to federal Pell Grants. Pell Grant aid for "Fast Track" students will not exceed the cost of tuition, fees, books, and supplies. "Fast Track" students can use Pell Grants to cover up to two semesters of dual-enrollment course work without those semesters counting against their lifetime Pell Grant eligibility.



The **Alliance for Excellent Education** (All4Ed) is a Washington, DC–based national policy, practice, and advocacy organization dedicated to ensuring that all students, particularly those underperforming and those historically underserved, graduate from high school ready for success in college, work, and citizenship. all4ed.org

Education Reform Now (ERN) is a nonprofit think tank and advocacy group that generates new ideas, promotes proven practices, and supports a durable network of advocates across policymaking and political arenas who strive to expand what works and change what is broken in the public education system, particularly for students of color and those from low-income families. edreformnow.org