



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Alonza Robertson
Lehman College Media Relations
P: 718-960-8710
E: alonzarobertson13@gmail.com

Lehman College students' success lauded as part of \$2.5 million award to AASCU

The higher-ed non-profit receives grant from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation

BRONX, N.Y., January, 9, 2020—The American Association of State Colleges and Universities (AASCU) was awarded a \$2.5 million, two-year grant Thursday from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation to dramatically accelerate policy-and-practice transformations that promise improved student outcomes across its membership of 400 public colleges and universities.

The award will help AASCU implement emerging student success strategies – including several new initiatives forged at Lehman College – across its network to assist today's students – especially low-income, first-generation, people of color and working adults.

“Pressure is mounting for colleges and universities to transform themselves to become more student-centered. Changing demographics, increasing demand for educated workers, intensifying financial pressures, and wavering public confidence are pushing a growing number of institutions to rethink and redesign their programs and services,” the foundation said in a statement.

The Washington D.C.-based AASCU was one of only 12 organizations to receive an Intermediaries for Scale grant, which, in all, totaled \$20 million from the Gates Foundation.

The foundation compared the intermediaries' role to that of a general contractor in a home renovation, where they will help colleges find the right partners (or subcontractors) to assist them in making fundamental changes in their culture, organizational structure and business models.

During the past several years, Lehman College has conducted extensive research audits to assess and identify gaps in student performance.

The College, while also experiencing overall student enrollment increases, subsequently designed program strategies that have dramatically boosted graduation rates (for regular students) by more than 12 percent annually for the past five years.

Some 18 months ago, Lehman also created an innovative retention program for first-year students, providing them additional resources, mentoring and guidance to enable them to successfully complete 30 hours of non-remedial courses in two semesters, a current anomaly for most U.S. college and university freshmen.

“This grant is clear recognition of the successful ongoing partnership between Lehman College, AASCU and our fellow AASCU institutions,” said Lehman College President Daniel Lemons. “Together we are pioneering approaches that close unacceptable opportunity gaps for students, most of whom are first generation, low-income, and of color. That includes increasing graduation rates and achieving better outcomes for first-year students.”

The Gates Foundation grant will help AASCU share what’s working at Lehman and four other institutions, which vary in size, urbanicity, and student diversity — Austin Peay State University (Tenn.); Bowie State University (Md.); California State University, San Bernardino; and Northwest Missouri State University — in order to help their membership consortium “get better, faster,” the foundation said.

“AASCU has consistently embraced the transformational power of our state colleges and universities,” said AASCU President Mildred García. “Aligned with our new strategic plan and by harnessing our members’ collective knowledge, this opportunity will support AASCU’s commitment to effectively address the needs of our diverse student populations.”

With the grant, AASCU will focus on four key goals:

- Increasing awareness of successful and promising transformation strategies among campus leaders and communities;
- Informing key campus-level decisions about change options and strategies and supporting decision-makers;
- Supporting transformation by providing guidance and resources for adopting and adapting, implementing, evaluating and sustaining changes in policy and practice;
- And building connections across colleges and universities and other supporting organizations to accelerate and streamline learning and sharing of promising practices.

“Not all postsecondary institutions have the resources to begin the structured transformation process necessary to narrow achievement gaps for current and future

generations of students,” García said. “Our institutions are transforming students and their families and graduating engaged citizens for our global democratic society. We are honored to have been selected to participate in this important work.”

Added Lemons, “I look forward to the next phase of this cross-institution collaboration as we continue to find ways to boost student achievement, not just in the Bronx, but throughout the United States.”

--end--