

Stay the Course

Helping Students Earn Degrees

THE NEED

We can all agree that education is the key to increased earning power since people increasingly need college degrees to get living-wage jobs. Community colleges are an affordable option for low-income students, but more than 60% of community college students don't graduate in six years. Low-income students face unequal barriers to achieving a college degree and are three times less likely to complete college. Money is only part of the problem.



Two-in-three community college students are food insecure



50% of community college students are housing insecure



13% of community college students are homeless

Some of Franklin County's hardest-working residents are working multiple jobs and raising families while studying to earn higher education degrees—all with the goal of improving their families' lives. For many of these students, it only takes one crisis to derail their plans. In the words of Columbus State Community College President David Harrison, "Many of our students are a flat tire away from dropping out."

Two out of three community college students are food insecure, 50% are housing insecure, and 13% are homeless. With these odds against them, it is easy to see why low-income students might see a college degree as being beyond their reach.

THE SOLUTION

At CSS we see an increasing need to help the working poor improve their economic stability through increased earning power, because minimum-wage jobs no longer earn enough to provide for families' basic needs. Education is the key to increased earning power, and community colleges are an affordable option for low-income students to earn degrees that will set them up for family supporting careers. But more than 60% of community college students fail to graduate within six years. Additionally, low-income students face unequal barriers to achieving a college degree and miss out on the life-changing opportunities that come with it.

STC is an innovative, evidence-based program proven to improve college persistence and completion among low-income community college students by addressing non-academic barriers, such as housing instability and workplace or family issues. Through STC, Catholic Social Services provides individualized case management (mentoring, coaching, referrals, etc.) and strategic emergency financial assistance, a combination that has proven effective for impacting low-income students who have the work effort and will to achieve a college degree.