KEY DESIGN FEATURES OF A GED TO COLLEGE PATHWAY

Targets low-income underprepared older youth and young adults who have known risk factors to college attainment and completion

- Entering students at seventh-grade educational level or above

- Youth 18 to 26 years old

- First-generation students goers who are members of underrepresented groups in college (e.g., African Americans, Latinos, Native Americans)

Offers the GED credential as a springboard to a postsecondary degree, a postsecondary credential program, or employment training, rather than as an end in itself

- Longer commitment expected than usual GED preparation program

- Combined preparation for GED exam and for successful entry to postsecondary certificate or degree program

- Explicit enrollment periods for cohorts (not year-round access)

- Well-articulated partnership with a postsecondary institution to align curricular and support strategies to ensure readiness, ease of transition, and first-year success

Prepares students to obtain necessary academic and non-cognitive skills for success in a postsecondary environment

- Rigorous curricula, with strong math, technology, and literacy components designed to prepare students for entry-level, credit-bearing college courses

- Integration of non-cognitive skills (e.g., self-confidence, leadership development, self-efficacy)

- Explicit college-going culture, with broad use of college exploratory experiences and assistance in all aspects of college preparation, including applying for financial aid

- Provision of extra time to integrate college readiness and navigation skills or a second-phase design after GED acquisition to help youth get ready for and transition to college

- Provides for referral or bridge programming for youth entering with lower than seventh-grade skills

Offers a well-structured social, financial, and academic support system through at least the first year of postsecondary education

- Cohort or learning community design with a focus on peer-based mentoring

- Interconnected web of services to address the social, financial, and academic needs of students and diagnostic assessments to ascertain exact support needs

- Easy access to tutoring and academic support both off and on-campus

- Use of cash and noncash incentives to address emergency needs and celebrate important milestones

- On and off campus employment opportunities (e.g. work study) related to students' career interests with flexible work schedules to minimize impact of work on study time

Implements a data-driven decision-making process, with well-designed systems of collecting, tracking, and analyzing performance data

- Regular use of short set of predictive data points to tailor intervention strategies to students' needs

- Consistent reporting, tracking, and analyzing of benchmarks to drive program improvement and quality practices

- Regular benchmark meetings with students to make transparent their progress towards college-readiness

- MOU with college partner to gain access to data collected at the college level

- Regular meetings with college partners to review data, examine trends, and use findings to improve partnership and service delivery

Fosters continuous improvement through ongoing professional development for staff

- Built-in professional development activities that cover best practices content, skills training, and cycle planning

- Well-trained teachers, counselors, and case managers who have a genuine interest in students' success and a demonstrated ability and desire to connect with older youths