

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE BIDEN HARRIS
ADMINISTRATION

A CORPS FOR STUDENT SUCCESS TO ADDRESS THE IMPACTS OF THE PANDEMIC ON AMERICA'S YOUNG PEOPLE

CONVENING PROCEEDINGS FROM THE
FEBRUARY 23, 2021 NATIONAL MEETING

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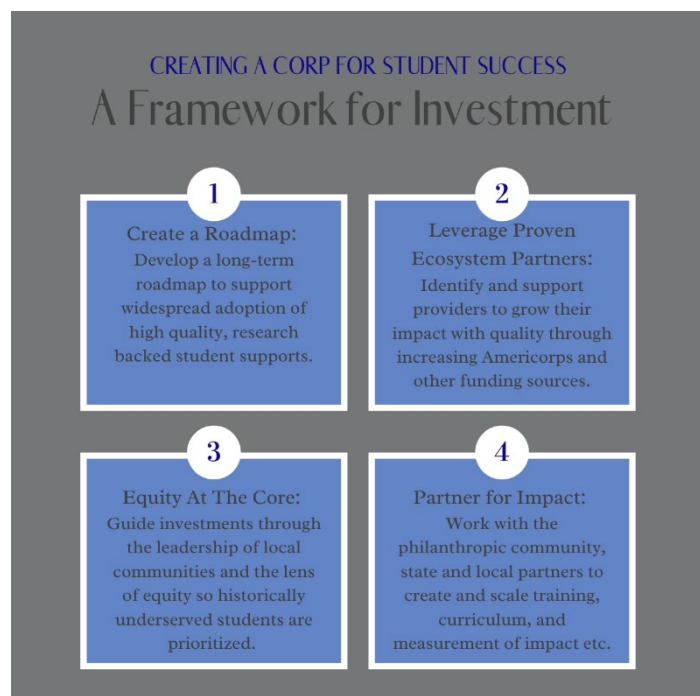
“If I have learned anything as an educator, it’s this: with the right supports, students are remarkably resilient.”

- Secretary of Education Miguel Cardona, [USA Today, March 2, 2021](#)

Summary

On February 23, over 100 leaders in education, civil rights, and youth development came together to deliberate on what is needed to support young people as they recover from the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and the accompanying racial reckoning, economic crisis, and educational disruption. Young people are resilient, but our education system is inequitably designed and insufficiently resourced to meet this crisis’s challenges.

Among the leaders convened, there was consensus that the policy and strategic decisions made now to reengage students, deepen their learning, build relationships, and empower educators to meet this challenge can enable us to remake our education system to effectively and equitably meet the needs of today’s learners—not just to build back, but to build back better. The group agreed on a specific recommendation for the Biden-Harris Administration on how to approach the challenge: **to create a national Corps for Student Success¹ by leveraging leadership, convening authority, federal funding, policy, and inter-agency collaboration to maximize the impact of federal, state, and local resources that can provide critical, evidence-based, people-powered supports to students, particularly those most impacted by the pandemic.**



Longstanding, significant and systemic inequities in our education system have been exacerbated over the past year. To ensure that we prevent gaps from permanently widening, and make real progress toward systemic change, the Biden-Harris Administration has the opportunity to shape an unprecedented, multi-faceted national investment in a Corps for Student Success through cross-sector local, state, and federal collaboration that can provide evidence-based, people-powered support for students, schools, and community partners that need it most. Done effectively, this investment, which could be built off of existing federal funding streams and strengthened with additional funds, would address near-term needs and

¹ To inform the development and implementation of a Corps for Student Success, a set of aligned partners have also developed a [Framework for Action: Building a Corps for Student Success](#), including core elements that define this approach.

establish a much-needed infrastructure of additional resources and capacity necessary for long term system change. The Corps for Student Success would be a call to service and action issued by the President and made real by knitting together federal funds, guidance, technical assistance, research, and other forms of policy and leadership with resources and action from the state and local levels. It would deploy millions of people in their communities and nationwide to wrap support around young people as they recover from the impacts and disruptions of the pandemic. Advancing this vision would entail, among other things:

- Convening leaders through a White House summit to issue a call to action and galvanize aligned public, private, and philanthropic resources and commitments;
- Elevating the evidence base to identify the investments, practices and ecosystem of supports most needed to provide effective engagement, support, and academic acceleration for students, including through messaging, agency guidance, and technical assistance;
- Identifying, marshalling, and focusing federal resources to maximize impact; and
- Following the lead of impacted communities and local leaders to determine what support is most needed where to ensure that investments supplement rather than supplant what exists and integrate to become part of their funding, staffing and structures over time (e.g. tutors become part of personalizing education).

This effort must respond to the urgency of the moment, focus on advancing equity, particularly racial equity, be informed by research and the science of learning and development, and use data to measure and improve results. Science and data have been beacons for helping the world emerge from this pandemic, and they are critical to providing young people with the support they need to not just survive today's challenges, but to thrive academically, socially, and emotionally. The science indicates that the most powerful levers we have for accelerating learning and development is the human relationship, which supports children and adolescents in developing skills and competencies necessary for learning, engagement and managing stress, and promotes their well-being, positive identity development, and belief in their own abilities. A national Corps for Student Success, will help supplement existing efforts in communities around the country to surround students with the relationships and support they deserve to attain their highest potential to the benefit of our entire country.

Turnaround for Children translates the science of learning and development into insights, knowledge, and resources to inspire and equip adults to implement an equitable whole-child design, practice, and measurement to help ensure that all students, regardless of race, gender, and socioeconomic status, have equitable opportunities for learning, development, and thriving in school and beyond. Turnaround does this by:

- *Crystallizing insights from the science of learning and development into the Well-Being Index, a measurement tool that captures a holistic view of each student's sense of their own physical, emotional, and social health, and the Turnaround for Children Toolbox, an online hub for science-grounded, practice-tested ideas and resources that empower educators to adopt whole-child approaches.*
- *Providing products, trainings, and consulting services to support districts, networks, and learning systems to help educators embed whole-child approaches in district policies, school design, practice, and measurement.*
- *Sharing insights and resources that encourage and equip policymakers and other leaders in the education ecosystem to create enabling conditions, including policies, funding, and structures, that support adoption of whole-child approaches.*



Challenge and Opportunity

The COVID-19 pandemic has created unprecedented disruption to schooling for millions of students. Despite heroic efforts from educators and families, the pandemic has exacerbated and compounded barriers to opportunity for young people whom our education system already underserved, particularly students from low-income backgrounds, tribal communities, BIPOC students, students experiencing homelessness, students from immigrant communities, students in foster care, justice-involved youth, students with disabilities, and English learners. Numerous proposals call for adding some form of "people power" to support students such as tutors, success coaches, mentors, or college advisors. Additional adults in these and other roles can help to address critical educational challenges magnified by the pandemic, including instructional loss, interrupted social-emotional development, disrupted transitions from high school to college or job training, and mental health and well-being. Each of these student supports, if implemented consistent with the evidence on effectiveness and configured to align to community assets and needs, has a role to play in enabling school systems and communities to address the educational and developmental impacts of the pandemic and long-standing inequities. These supports can also supplement the capacity of educators and other adults who have been supporting children's learning and development, while also dealing with unprecedented demands and their own trauma throughout the pandemic.

City Year AmeriCorps members serve as Student Success Coaches in 29 cities to advance educational equity, while preparing the next generation of diverse, civically engaged leaders. Student Success Coaches (SSCs) serve full-time on diverse teams in systemically under-resourced schools to add critical youth development capacity by:

- Forming near-peer, developmental relationships with students and connecting with families to increase student engagement and attendance;
- Providing integrated, evidence-based academic tutoring interwoven with social, emotional, and cognitive skill-building opportunities
- Collaborating with teachers and administrators to create personalized learning environments where students feel a sense of safety, belonging, and joy
- Providing extended learning and enrichment opportunities
- Increasing schools' capacity to address variability in student development and learning
- Using holistic data to inform student supports, including early warning indicators of falling off-track to high school graduation



Schools, particularly those in communities that have experienced decades of under-investment and are being disproportionately impacted by the pandemic, are not currently designed to

4-H is a research-based experience that includes a mentor, a hands-on project, and a meaningful leadership opportunity. 4-H reaches almost six million young people through programs delivered by 3,500 4-H professionals and 500,000 volunteers. Young people experience 4-H in every county and parish in the country through in-school and after-school programs, school and community clubs, and 4-H camps. Based on their interests and guided by adult mentors, youth develop their own pathway in 4-H. They select from a broad menu of local 4-H programs that provide hands-on, learn-by-doing, opportunities.



provide student support with the scale, personalization, and intensity the moment demands. A recent report by Bellwether Education estimated that 3 million students--roughly the school age population of Florida--have not connected in-person or virtually in formal education since March 2020. If we do not take action to provide additional support at the scale required now, we face the prospect of failing a generation of students, leaving them with diminished opportunities and resulting in magnified inequities and longer-term negative consequences. Conversely, an investment in

meeting student needs now and integrating new approaches to personalization, academic

acceleration, relationships, and engagement can support the enormous potential and abilities of students in all communities and address inequities by building more capacity into systems permanently where needed.

Additional people power, effectively and equitably applied, will support students and teachers, and be a source of upskilling, employment, and economic mobility—including building and diversifying the teacher pipeline and addressing looming teacher shortages².

We know from the science of learning and development that positive developmental relationships are directly connected to learning—such relationships can mitigate the effects of stress and trauma that inhibit learning, and can ignite and support students’ readiness for and engagement in academic, cognitive, and intellectual development. Given the centrality and impact of relationships on learning and development, this people power must draw from people with the

experiences, training, and skills to establish these relationships, and should prioritize engaging people from the communities served. Investments will need to be made in the infrastructure necessary for this work including the skills, training, and capacity building for these educators with a focus on scalable, measurable and replicable investments including leveraging

Since last summer, The Oakland REACH has operated a virtual hub providing intensive support to students and families, with an emphasis on literacy. The nonprofit parent organization is now forming a stronger partnership with the Oakland Unified School District (OUSD) to support students during the pandemic, including both in-person learning hubs that help students connect to online enrichment, and an expansion of their virtual hub model, which provides academic and social enrichment, technology training and support, parent workshops, and other wraparound services. The Oakland REACH will continue to use its hubs to deliver literacy instruction consistent with the latest research on reading, and their partnership with OUSD will expand these practices to more district schools.



Communities In Schools offers school-based coordinators who bring public and private community resources into schools to empower success for all students by removing personal and systemic barriers allowing them to stay in school and on a path to graduation by leveraging evidence relationships and local resources to drive results. Site coordinators work with school administrators to assess school and individual student needs, develop a plan and build a team to provide tiers of integrated student supports, leveraging resources inside and outside the school to support students and family success. They monitor student and school progress and adjust supports to optimize results for high school graduation and increased attendance for schools in need.



technology to meet this need. A common learning agenda with common measures would allow for the deployment of resources at scale and with insight into what works for whom and when. Developing these resources through public-private partnerships with the philanthropic community is an enormous opportunity and could support educators at a critical time when they have also been strained by the challenges of the pandemic.

While all schools have students in need of additional support, the

²The Learning Policy Institute estimates this shortage to be approximately 100,000 annually prior to the pandemic https://learningpolicyinstitute.org/sites/default/files/product-files/A_Coming_Crisis_in_Teaching_REPORT.pdf

majority of students with the greatest unmet educational need pre-pandemic and those hardest hit by the pandemic are [concentrated](#) in about 500 urban, suburban, and rural school districts throughout the U.S., providing an opportunity for focusing efforts to support our most impacted communities. Many of these districts have critical infrastructure and local capacity which can be knitted together through federal action: 62% of these districts, for example, are already connected to the Corporation for National and Community Service through partnership with AmeriCorps members to deliver support to students.

Plan of Action

The Administration is uniquely positioned to issue a call to action and invite myriad actors to join in creating a Corps for Student Success that would bring together the evidence base, practical know-how, and available resources to respond to community needs and increase state and local capacity to provide additional people power to our students and schools. A Corps for Student Success and its ecosystem of support would strategically leverage local decision-making by inviting mayors, city councils, school districts, and other leaders to

identify community assets and needs, and use aligned federal, state, and local resources to train and deploy adults and peers who can provide needed supports to students, including by extending learning time. Students affected by the pandemic and experiencing longstanding inequities need additional **instructional support, mental and physical health support, basic life necessities** (food, housing, etc.), and **engaging, student-centered experiences**.³ These could be effectively provided through support from and meaningful connection to some combination

of **educators, tutors, student success coaches, mentors, and college and career advisors** in school and during out-of-school time, in-person, and through effective uses of technology. The challenges of the moment and the breadth of student supports needed call for an ecosystem approach within each community.

Each community should implement the Corps for Student Success by collaborating with families, educators, and community leaders to assess local needs, identify partners, and draw

The National Student Support Accelerator seeks to support the implementation of high-impact tutoring. They recommend that tutoring programs have either independent, experimental evidence of effectiveness at improving student learning OR these five features:

- Embedded in existing schools either during the school day or immediately before or after the school day.
- Tutoring sessions should include a minimum of three sessions per week.
- Students should work with a consistent tutor who is supported by ongoing oversight and coaching. The basis of effective tutoring is strong tutor-student relationships. Tutors need initial training, oversight, ongoing coaching, and clear lines of accountability for the program to be effective.
- Tutors should use data to understand students' strengths and needs and should build their sessions to focus on the needs.
- The materials that tutors use with their students should be aligned with both state standards and research on teaching and learning and should be engaging for students and easy for tutors to use, given their training and experience.



NATIONAL STUDENT
SUPPORT ACCELERATOR



³ Please find in the appendix a few examples of the myriad programs and practices that can animate this vision and plan for a Corps for Student Success.

on relevant federal, state, and local resources to urgently supplement and sustainably embed people-powered capacity in all the places young people learn and develop.

Whichever form they take, these additional student, school, and community-based supports must align with six key principles to be effective in the short term and contribute to building a more equitable education system for the long-term:

1. Take a holistic, evidence-based approach,⁴ grounded in the science of learning and development that attends to young people’s cognitive, academic, social, and emotional development;
2. By design and training, be relationship-centered; culturally, linguistically, ability affirming; and asset-based;
3. Flexibly align with the needs and chosen approach to recovery of each community as identified in collaboration with families, educators, and other community leaders;
4. Be broadly available to communities to respond to the pandemic, but focused on sustainably serving the students who have been least well-served to build a more equitable education system;
5. Be evidence-building as well as evidence-based by using data on student attendance, engagement, experience, and learning to inform continuous improvement and by appropriately, equitably, and holistically measuring impact and cost-effectiveness relative to reaching and serving all populations (including students with disabilities, English learners, and students experiencing homelessness, each of whom have specific rights and needs that must be attended to); and
6. Be integrated into the school day and school practices in a manner that supports and is not burdensome to teachers, as well as offered in community-based settings and during out-of-school time.

By bringing together, leveraging, and adapting existing federal programs, structures, and funding streams, the federal government can support the launch of the Corps for Student

⁴ While some might suggest that “evidence based” provides only a narrow opportunity to adopt branded programs that have been proven effective via a randomized control trial, there is a broader, deeper and more equitable understanding of “evidence based” that considers evidence from a continuum of sources, weighing the strengths and limitations of each and focusing on both practices (including instructional strategies) and programs with an eye to ensuring there is evidence that all students can be effectively served. Decisions must be made drawing from research and taking into account implementation requirements, cost-benefit analysis, and stakeholder support, among other things. This broader and deeper approach is already embedded in federal law through the four levels defined in the Every Student Succeeds Act and ED’s guidance, [Using Evidence to Strengthen Education Investments](#).

Success rapidly enough to accelerate pandemic recovery within the next few months. Key recommendations for the Biden-Harris Administration to act on include:

Host a White House Summit to Create A Call to Action for the Corps for Student Success

The White House has a unique ability to convene leaders from across sectors and focus their expertise and resources on an important national need and policy agenda. The opportunity to launch the Corps for Student Success will require engaging educators, state and local leaders, community based organizations, and impacted communities in dialogue with researchers, philanthropy, business leaders, and federal agencies about what each can do to implement a Corps for Student Success. Other opportunities to highlight the importance of this initiative could include mentioning it in the President's Joint Address to Congress/State of the Union, referencing it in the President's FY 2022 budget proposal, or having the President give a speech that outlines the commitment.

Leverage Existing Mechanisms to Maximize Funding and Flexibility to Support State and Local Implementation

While possible, it is not necessary to create a significant new federal program to implement the Corps for Student Success. The Administration could more easily and quickly identify existing federal funding sources, including from COVID relief packages and regular budget line items that can be used from federal agencies for federal, state, and local implementation of the Corps for Student Success. This could include leveraging funds, such as the \$1 billion for the Corporation for National and Community Service and the \$126 billion in K12 education from the American Rescue Plan, as well as Elementary and Secondary Education Act, AmeriCorps, and Workforce Investment and Opportunity Act funding, among other federal funding streams. The Administration could issue guidance to state, local, and non-governmental leaders regarding how these funds can be accessed (e.g. within the Title funds) and leveraged consistent with the implementation of a Corps for Student Success, including information about existing flexibilities or those that could be granted by federal, state or local authorities to maximize the flexibility to use such funds effectively. This could also include an effort to identify and elevate to state, local, and non-governmental leaders non-federal funding sources to supplement the federal investment. Federal research dollars, including the \$100 million provided to IES through the American Rescue Plan Act, should also be used to holistically and equitably measure the



uptake, engagement, experience, and academic progress of students served by the Corps for Student Success, while also ensuring adherence to relevant federal, state and local privacy laws.

Provide Dedicated Funding

The Administration could help to meet the immediate needs and ensure the sustainability of the proposed supports by requesting from Congress specific funding for the Corps for Student Success in future COVID-19 relief packages as well as through major increases to existing funding streams, particularly those that provide targeted resources to students who are underserved by our school system and disproportionately impacted by the pandemic. This could include significant increases in funding for ESEA Title I, Title III, Title IV Part A, Title IV Part B, Education Innovation and Research grants, AmeriCorps State and National, AmeriCorps VISTA, AmeriCorps Seniors, the Volunteer Generation Fund, State Commission Administrative Grants, and the National Service Trust Fund.

Local Organization of People Powered Supports for Students:
In response to the pandemic, the Cleveland Foundation has partnered with over 35 community-based organizations, intermediaries, and the Metro Cleveland School District to provide safe physical space and learning opportunities throughout the day for over 1200 students from the most under-resourced areas of the community and increased support for students with disabilities. Public-private support and coordination between the schools and out-of-school time (OST) providers has enabled targeted professional development for teachers and OST practitioners and shared data collection and research to support additional academic, social, emotional, and enrichment programming for students to accelerate their learning and development throughout the day.

A Successful Model: Metro Cleveland



Issue Federal Guidance and Implement Federal Programs

There are many opportunities to use program implementation and guidance (both regulatory and non-regulatory) to help recipients of federal funds implement the Corps for Student Success. ED and CNCS will soon be making multiple decisions regarding the distribution and use of American Rescue Plan funds. Some examples of the programs and opportunities where guidance could be used to advance the Corps for Student Success include but are not limited to:

- The dollars provided to CNCS should be used to rapidly expand the number of AmeriCorps members serving in schools and further diversify participation. These funds can increase benefits provided to AmeriCorps members, such as the living allowance, so that programs can recruit more diverse candidates who could otherwise not afford to participate, including residents/young adults from the priority communities targeted for services. Funding in the American Rescue Plan, as well as future stimulus funds, may be prioritized for Corps for Student Success programs. Importantly, the authorizing legislation for AmeriCorps already ensures that members may not be used to displace or duplicate existing educators or staff, or replace existing volunteers.

While all \$126 billion provided in the American Rescue Plan to support K12 education could be used in ways that are consistent with the vision of the Corps for Student Success, the set asides at the state and local levels to address students' social, emotional and academic needs are particularly aligned with this initiative. In implementing these set-asides, ED could require

states and districts to outline their plans, including those for coordination with other actors for evidence-based, people-powered supports such as student success coaches, high impact tutoring, extended learning time, wraparound services, college and career advisors, and youth development programs that would meet the requirements of the legislation and the needs of all students, including [students with disabilities](#), English learners, students of color, students from low-income families.

- ED and CNCS should provide joint guidance on how governors, state education agencies, state services commissions, municipal governments, and local school districts can work together to support the formation of the Corps for Student Success by leveraging the Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund and the Governors Emergency Relief Fund included in the American Rescue Plan Act, the CARES Act, and the December 2020 COVID Relief Package.
- ED should provide programmatic guidance to enable implementation of the Corps for Student Success in communities where the opportunity and need is greatest. This could include:
 - Clarifying the targeting of ARP dollars to underserved students;
 - Creating clear guidance on allowable uses of Title I, Title III, Title IV, Part A-Student Supports, Title IV, Part B-21st Century Community Learning Centers, Community Schools, and new funding included in COVID-19 relief packages;
 - Highlighting that funds can be blended through public-private partnership and combined to support the Corps for Student Success;
 - Clarifying that all education program dollars can be used as match for AmeriCorps; and
 - Encouraging the creation of local multi-sectoral steering committees akin to what has been [mandated by the state of Tennessee](#).

Ensure Technical Assistance and Support

To support the Corps for Student Success, ED should set aside funding to support technical assistance that local communities can access to support their specific needs. ED could also provide guidance and flexibility to help states, districts, and communities identify which federal funding streams can be used for technical assistance and how they can be combined to build the Corps for Student Success. Ensure quality supports, learning and improvement over time through guidance

Funded through a Department of Justice grant (Part G OJJDP Youth Mentoring (CJS)), in 2013, the Department of Justice Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) selected MENTOR: The National Mentoring Partnership (MENTOR) to establish the National Mentoring Resource Center (NMRC). The NMRC delivers customized, no-cost technical assistance (federally subsidized) consulting and coaching to schools, non-profits, and faith-based organizations across the nation to help them align their work with evidence-based best practices for delivering quality and high-impact mentoring relationships for young people. Leveraging MENTOR's Affiliates and a national network of subject matter experts, requesting organizations are connected with a relevant mentoring expert who can assist them with improving or strengthening any aspect of a new or existing mentoring effort, providing a comprehensive assessment and concrete tips and tools to help them avoid re-inventing the wheel while making their program as responsive as possible to the communities they serve and intended impact.

A Successful Model: DOJ and Mentor



on the evidence-base, and collaboration with researchers, practitioners, and philanthropy to develop a common learning agenda, curricular supports, training, and common measures to enhance the quality and consistency of additional people-powered supports that can supplement evidence-based practices of educators.

Create an Interagency Working Group to Ensure Coordination and Ample Funding

The Administration should launch an interagency partnership between CNCS and ED that would:

- Leverage CNCS’s infrastructure—including governor-appointed state service commissions in most states and territories—and proven ability to rapidly organize impactful additional people power in communities in response to crises;
- Combine CNCS’s infrastructure with ED’s relationships with state and local education agencies and experience providing guidance to ensure program effectiveness; and
- Involve additional agencies, including the Departments of Labor, Commerce, Justice, and Health and Human Services to provide key capacity and ensure that children most in need are holistically supported.

CNCS and ED successfully partnered on creating the School Turnaround AmeriCorps (2013–2018) using School Improvement Grant funding to support full-time AmeriCorps teams in schools implementing turnaround interventions as required by the SIG program or required by ESEA flexibility. ED and CNCS worked together to establish mutual goals and expectations for the School Turnaround AmeriCorps grant program, such as partnership commitment, evaluation, performance metrics, and overall program design. AmeriCorps members used evidence-informed interventions to increase parent and family engagement and student learning time; improve school culture, safety, and attendance; address students' acquisition of reading and mathematics skills, and increase graduation and college enrollment rates.

A Successful Model: Interagency Partnership



CORPORATION FOR
NATIONAL &
COMMUNITY
SERVICE

ED played similar roles in the Obama-Biden administration’s interagency School Turnaround AmeriCorps and the Every Student, Every Day campaign to reduce chronic absenteeism. This opportunity might be immediately advanced during the implementation of the American Rescue Plan Act, which will provide billions of dollars in funding that could be used to build the Corps for Student Success if implemented with that goal in sight.

Conclusion

There are concerns about the possibility of a lost generation of students as a result of pandemic-related disruptions. However, the leadership of the Biden-Harris Administration can provide the people-powered approach of a Corps for Student Success that “builds back better” to a *found generation* of students by equitably providing the relationships and learning that enable them to thrive. The urgency of pandemic recovery is universal, yet the impacts of COVID-19 are felt differently by students, particularly those most underserved by existing school systems and structures. Therefore, we need a response that benefits all young people, while creating a more coherent and integrated approach across systems that provides sustainable support to address long standing inequities for our most marginalized students. This is the opportunity and the urgency that begs the action of the Biden-Harris Administration.

Appendix A: Organizing and Launching a Corps for Student Success

