

HEDS Student Success Champions Program

2025 Cohort Call for Applications – Deadline September 20, 2024

The Higher Education Data Sharing Consortium (HEDS) is a community of colleges and universities that share data, knowledge, and expertise to advance undergraduate liberal arts education, inclusive excellence, and student success. In 2022, HEDS kicked off the HEDS Student Success Champions Program. We designed this program to support people who play an important role promoting student success at their institutions. The two-year program aims to: (1) strengthen student success efforts at colleges and universities, and (2) help Student Success Champions develop leadership and change management skills to support those efforts. We invite anyone who is, or will be, working on a student success initiative at their college or university to apply. We will accept applications for the 2025 cohort of Student Success Champions until September 20, 2024.

Core elements of the HEDS Student Success Champions Program

During their two-year term, Student Success Champions will become part of a community of practice that's focused on student success. This community includes other Student Success Champions, the HEDS Directors and staff, HEDS Board members, and leaders with experience in institutional improvement.

The HEDS Student Success Champions Program employs a “learning by doing” approach. Champions develop leadership and change management skills as they help design and/or implement a student success initiative at their institution. Through this work, Champions will gain confidence in their leadership abilities and build resilience to work through challenges that often thwart institutional change efforts.

Do you ever feel lonely in your work around student success? Do you ever feel overwhelmed by the vast number of resources (tools, articles, books, journals, and software) available to help your campus improve student's persistence and belonging? Do you wish for colleagues that can sing in your choir, empathize with your work, and help you be a better professional AND laugh at your jokes? Then Student Success Champions is for you! Working with a cohort of like-minded professionals who ask thoughtful questions, engage in meaningful debate, share their tools, and offer their insights has been the most helpful professional development activity I have participated in in 15 years, and I've been doing this for 27! I highly encourage you to apply for this program – your project will improve, your professional network will expand, and you will be reminded of the joy that comes from making an impact and connecting!

Katy Lowe Schneider, Hanover College

Student Success Champions will work on a student success project for their institution during their time in the program. Champions may develop a new project when they join the program or continue their work on an existing project at their institution. A broad range of projects fit under our student success umbrella, including initiatives aimed at increasing retention and persistence, improving graduation rates, promoting equity and inclusion, helping students explore vocation and purpose in life, promoting students' well-being, helping students develop academic and life skills, and helping students figure out meaningful next steps after graduation. Of course, it's okay if your project changes during your time in the program. That's not unusual. Regardless of the direction your project takes, the program will support you and your work for students.

Student Success Champions have worked on a wide range of projects including:

- Redesigning academic probation to support the success of students who are struggling academically.
- Developing an advising program to better support students who've lost financial aid eligibility because they weren't making satisfactory academic progress.
- Using student focus groups to help faculty increase the sense of student belonging and community in their classes.
- Designing a unit in an institution's student success management system to improve the use and effectiveness of office hours.
- Helping students who've left the institution return to continue their academic career.

- Studying the effects of low-touch, high-impact teaching practices on students’ perceptions of faculty-student relationships and students’ sense of academic belonging.
- Increasing collaboration between student support offices at an institution to simplify the ways that students can receive support and increase retention.
- Creating an academic warning system and intervention for students who are on the verge of academic probation.
- Better equipping faculty, staff, and students to support mental health and well-being.
- Creating a cross-divisional advisory group to review data, practices, and policies related to student success and suggest practices to improve student outcomes based on those findings.
- Creating team-based advising.
- Creating or revising programs to improve students’ sense of belonging and thriving during their first two years in college.

Even if you don’t have a project completely fleshed out, share your ideas for your project in the application. I entered the program with one idea for a project, but that idea morphed and took on new life as I received helpful feedback from other participants. In addition, this experience has been really beneficial in allowing me to get feedback from individuals that are not on my campus. These outside perspectives have helped me think differently about my project and find new ways to work through obstacles I may be facing. In short, if you see yourself benefiting in any way from this program, do yourself a favor and apply.

Jonathan Manz, Lewis & Clark College

Student Success Champions will develop their skills and receive project support through the following activities:

1. Two face-to-face meetings each year, one in January and one in July/August, that focus on helping Student Success Champions develop practical leadership skills, including approaches to engaging the support of academic leaders, using evidence to advance projects, building coalitions, working with challenging faculty and staff, and keeping projects moving forward in dynamic institutional environments. Each meeting lasts for 4 days and 3 nights.
2. Two hour-long, small group, virtual check-in meetings each year—in spring and fall—with HEDS leaders for updates on their projects, troubleshooting obstacles, and honing plans for next steps.
3. Ongoing consultation with HEDS Directors, colleagues from other institutions, and other Student Success Champions about their projects. The consultations will focus on real-time troubleshooting to help the Champions sharpen their projects and overcome barriers.

Who can apply to be a HEDS Student Success Champion?

The program is open to any employee at a 2-year or 4-year, public or private, non-profit higher education institution—including faculty, student affairs professionals, administrators, assessment professionals, and institutional researchers—who is, or will soon be, engaged in a student success project and can secure the support from their institution that we describe below.

This year, we will select up to 15 individuals for the program. Two individuals from the same institution may apply as a team.

This program will give you the encouragement you need to dream, design, and implement a student success program on your campus. You’ll be part of a warm and supportive group of colleagues from a variety of institutions, who will help you strategize and hone your ideas into an attainable plan. Just as important, you’ll be able to normalize the challenges and struggles of getting a project off the ground and maintaining project momentum in a supportive think tank collective. Jump in and apply. You’ll be taking part in an incredible professional development experience.

Trish Moser, Rollins College

Institutional and individual commitments for the program

The HEDS Student Success Champions Program follows a cohort model, and each Champion participates in the program for a two-year term. We're soliciting applications for the fourth cohort of the program now. The term for this cohort of HEDS Student Success Champions will begin in January 2025. We expect Champions to attend four meetings each year (two face-to-face and two virtual).

As a section of our website is dedicated to the Student Success Champions Program, we will also ask each Champion to submit a headshot that we can post publicly on our website.

This program has offered me the opportunity to challenge myself to find ways to leave my institution better than I found it by creating a project that adds meaning to the work I do to serve students. My cohort has offered me a safe and supportive space to develop a project with objective feedback. I have found that while projects may alter over the course of time, the dedication to student success is unwavering.

Janelle Gibson, Camden County College

Cost

We strive to keep costs as low as possible for this program. If your institution is a member of HEDS, we do not charge a program fee to participate; your institution will only be responsible for the cost of your travel, food, and lodging for the two face-to-face meetings each year. If your institution does not belong to HEDS, we charge a one-time, \$1,000 program fee *and* the cost of your travel, food, and lodging for the two face-to-face meetings each year. If you think your institution might be interested in joining HEDS, you can learn more about it [here](#).

The first meeting will be January 8-11, 2025, at the conference center at Wabash College in Crawfordsville, IN. The second meeting will be July 29-August 1, 2025, also at Wabash College. Both meetings will begin with dinner on the first day and end at 1:00 p.m. on the fourth day (all times Eastern). The cost of each meeting in 2025, which covers three nights of lodging, food, and transportation between the Indianapolis International Airport and Wabash College, will be around \$725. We can provide additional nights of lodging to accommodate flight schedules at \$125-\$150 per night. Please note, if food and lodging costs increase dramatically while you are in the program, we may need to increase the price we charge for meetings.

We outline estimated program costs in the table to the right.

Estimating the program cost to your institution

Costs	Your Institution's HEDS Membership Status	
	Member	Non-Member
Program fee (paid upfront)	\$0	\$1,000
Lodging, food, and local transportation for each 4-day/3-night meeting at Wabash College (paid around the time of each meeting)	~\$725 x 4	~\$725 x 4
Travel to each meeting at Wabash College: Airfare to Indianapolis International Airport plus transportation to your local airport and airport parking -or- Mileage/driving expenses to Crawfordsville, IN	Varies x 4	Varies x 4

Application requirements

We seek people with a passion for improving student success who want to join a nationwide, interdisciplinary community focused on helping students achieve their goals for college and life. Champions must be willing to share their experiences working on student success initiatives at their institutions, both the good and the bad, with others in the program. We are also looking for people who are willing to spend time outside of formal meetings to offer advice and provide feedback to their colleagues in the program. We are especially interested in applications from people who would be willing to pay it forward and use their skills and knowledge to support future Champions.

Applicants should prepare a document that addresses the following questions. Please address each question separately rather than writing one essay to answer all the questions. If you are applying as a team, please answer questions 1-7 individually and write a joint response to question 8.

1. Why would you like to be part of the HEDS Student Success Champions Program?
2. What student success goals would you like to pursue during the program?
3. What are the biggest challenges that students at your institution face?
4. What strengths do your students bring to bear on these challenges?
5. What strengths and weaknesses do you see at your institution that may impact your work on a student success project?
6. What skills and experiences do you bring to student success work?
7. What skills would you like the program to help you develop?
8. Champions will work on a student success project for their institution during their time in the program. Will you be starting a new project or continuing work on an existing project during the HEDS Student Success Champions Program? (Please see follow-up questions below.)
 - If you'll be starting a new project, please describe the goals for the project and any preliminary thoughts you have on the shape of the project. It's okay if your ideas about a potential project change during your work as a Student Success Champion. We'd just like to get a sense of what you're thinking about now.
 - If you'll be continuing to work on an existing project, please briefly describe the goals of the project, where you are in the project, what's going well, and what's not been as successful.

Please include a letter of support from an administrative leader at your institution. This letter should briefly explain the importance of your work on student success to your institution and their commitment to cover the costs of travel and expenses for two face-to-face meetings a year for the two years of the program along with the \$1,000 program fee, if applicable.

Applications are due on September 20, 2024. Please submit your responses to the application questions and your letter of support to Charlie Blaich and Kathy Wise at StudentSuccessChampions@hedsconsortium.org.

We will announce the fourth cohort of HEDS Student Success Champions on November 15, 2024.

Important Year 1 dates for the 2025 Cohort

July 1, 2024 – Call for applications opens

September 20, 2024 – Application deadline

November 15, 2024 – HEDS announces 2025 cohort of Student Success Champions

January 8-11, 2025 – Student Success Champions meeting at Wabash College in Crawfordsville, IN

April and/or May 2025 (TBD) – Virtual update meetings – hour-long, individually-scheduled small groups

July 29-August 1, 2025 – Student Success Champions meeting at Wabash College in Crawfordsville, IN

October 2025 (TBD) – Virtual update meetings – hour-long, individually-scheduled small groups

Questions?

If you have questions about the HEDS Student Success Champions Program, the student success project you're considering for the program, the application, or anything else, please contact Charlie Blaich and Kathy Wise at StudentSuccessChampions@hedsconsortium.org. We're happy to talk!