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Higher Learning Advocates Launches 'Widen the Path' Trailblazer Initiative with Institutions and Nonprofit Leaders to Raise Awareness Around the 40 Million Americans with Some College and No Degree



College presidents and nonprofit executives team up with Higher Learning Advocates (HLA) as Widen the Path Trailblazers. Their goal is to encourage federal policy change on behalf of today's students, many of whom have some college credentialing and no degree.

WASHINGTON, D.C. - Today, Higher Learning Advocates' (HLA's) Widen the Path campaign launched the Trailblazer Initiative to highlight institutions across the country demonstrating change. The first group of Trailblazers spotlights higher learning institutions and student-support organizations that are making educational pathways more equitable and accessible for students, especially the 40 million Americans with 'some college and no degree.'

The first team of Trailblazers includes: Michael Baston, president of **Cuyahoga Community College**, Anne Kress, president of **Northern Virginia Community College**, Paul LeBlanc,

president of **Southern New Hampshire University**, Jim Henderson, CEO and president of the **University of Louisiana System**, and Mike Larsson, CEO and co-founder of **Duet**, as well as Mary Leviner, who serves as the coaching platforms senior director of student services. Further Trailblazers from employers, advocacy groups, and students are to be announced later in the year.

“We see the Trailblazer initiative as a tremendous opportunity to celebrate the individuals and institutions responsible for the innovative solutions that are propelling the higher education system forward,” said **Julie Peller, executive director of HLA**. “Through collaboration with learners, institutions of higher education, partner organizations, policymakers, and stakeholders from across the political spectrum, our hope is that federal policymakers will be inspired by the Trailblazers who have demonstrated tremendous leadership in the face of an unfavorable federal policy environment. Change is possible, and can have a profound impact on students and the 40 million Americans with some college and no degree.”

The Trailblazers join more than [45 organizations](#) who have partnered with HLA’s Widen the Path campaign. Many of the policies championed by the Trailblazers at institutions across the country are in lockstep with the campaign’s legislative agenda, which includes the expansion of Workforce Pell, Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) reform, and creation of more affordable and accessible options for Credit for Prior Learning (CPL).

Additional Quotes from Widen the Path Trailblazers

“The Trailblazer Initiative is aligned with SNHU’s mission to transform the lives of learners by making higher education more flexible and accessible,” said **Dr. Paul LeBlanc, president of SNHU**. “The kinds of learners SNHU serves are often those who face multiple barriers on their journey to a degree, and we are proud to sign the [Widen the Path] pledge and help share their stories to advocate for positive change.”

“Our most vulnerable community members are a vital resource in meeting workforce demands if we remove barriers to access,” said **Dr. Michael Baston, president of Tri-C**. “By reforming Satisfactory Academic Progress legislation and providing access to Federal Pell Grant support for short-term training and certification, we can connect workers with in-demand jobs that are unfilled.”

“NOVA is committed to widening the path to educational opportunity by providing college credit for prior learning and industry-recognized credentials,” said **Dr. Anne Kress, president of Northern Virginia Community College**. “Our partnerships with both employers and transfer universities create multiple on-ramps to degree completion, building stronger and brighter futures for the full diversity of learners.”

“The returning adults we serve through Compete LA face myriad barriers when attempting to return to school, the chief concern being financial constraints,” **Dr. Jim Henderson, president and CEO of the University of Louisiana System**, said. “Re-examining the federal regulations

on SAP to expand opportunities for returning adults would have a lasting impact on individuals trying to improve their economic futures.”

“Our coaching program is designed for students who need to earn a degree but need to prioritize work and family too,” said **Mike Larsson, CEO and co-Founder of Duet**. “Forty million people have some college credit but no degree. We know first-hand that these students absolutely have what it takes to graduate. They just need a different path.”

Learn more at www.widenthepath.org/trailblazer.

About Higher Learning Advocates

Higher Learning Advocates (HLA) is the leading bipartisan nonprofit organization advocating for today’s students and their postsecondary success through policy and systems change. Established in 2017, HLA aims to strengthen policies and support programs to ensure opportunity and promote inclusive pathways for all learners to succeed through an equitable system of higher learning, employment, and economic mobility.