



NEW RESEARCH: Philadelphians Say Living Expenses Block College Completion

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[The Hope Center for College, Community, and Justice](#) recommends widespread action to uplift residents of the nation's poorest major city, in a new report that highlights affordability as the key barrier for Philadelphians who want to obtain a college degree.

"Philadelphians Speak Up About Barriers to College Completion" features the efforts of community organizations such as [Graduate! Philadelphia](#) to lift adult students out of poverty and into prosperity. It also recommends key actions by city and state leaders to help Philadelphians find an affordable way to complete their studies and improve their economic mobility:

- Augmenting existing community-based and college-run programs aimed at those who have not completed degrees.
- Expanding access to supports like the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP).
- Creating a citywide emergency aid fund.
- Expanding affordable child-care offerings.

"When communities fail to support students, they fail at allowing them to succeed," said Dr. Sara Goldrick-Rab, President & Founder of The Hope Center. "We urge community leaders and organizations to use our recommendations to change the trajectory of Philadelphia's aspiring adult students."

The Hope Center's recommendations are aimed at reversing the trend of Philadelphians stopping out of college. In the city, approximately one in four residents lives in poverty, and more than one in six residents over 25 started college but left before graduation. Comparatively, half of the city's available jobs require at least some education beyond high school. Fewer than one in four survey respondents who have not started or completed college described the city's four-year schools as "very affordable." And nearly two in five without a college degree said that rent and childcare were "not affordable" for those attending college.

This research was conducted with Temple University's [Institute for Survey Research](#) and made possible by support from the [Lenfest Foundation](#). It also complements [a recently released Hope Center report](#) that documented the challenges of students currently enrolled in Philadelphia-area colleges during the pandemic.

ABOUT THE HOPE CENTER

The Hope Center for College, Community, and Justice is an action research center redefining what it means to be a student-ready college with a national movement centering on #RealCollege students' basic needs. Our work is guided by five pillars: action research, institutional transformation, policy and advocacy, communications, and sustainability.

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