



Hope Center Launches Initiative on “Real Price of College”

Lumina Foundation grant funds new Texas-focused project

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September 9, 2019 - Widespread confusion over college prices is making it hard for students to earn college degrees. To help colleges better reveal and address this issue, today the Hope Center for College, Community, and Justice launched a new initiative, “The Real Price of College: Improving Estimates of Demonstrated Financial Need.” Supported with a \$650,000 18-month grant from [Lumina Foundation](#), the project will help six Texas colleges and universities develop better ways to determine students’ financial need, provide more accurate estimates of cost of attendance, and improve communications related to financial need and price for students, their families, and institutional stakeholders.

“Our work demonstrates that when students don’t know what college really costs, they have trouble making ends meet, even falling short on money for food and housing,” offered Dr. Sara Goldrick-Rab, Founding Director of the Hope Center. “Community colleges and public universities are also dealing with their own budget crunches; we hope this project will help them identify cost-effective ways to help students.”

This project is especially important as federal policymakers consider better ways to assess and report on student need. Working within existing federal frameworks, the Hope Center team will implement and test ideas first outlined in work from Dr. Goldrick-Rab, including her book [Paying the Price](#) and a [report](#) issued by [The Century Foundation](#).

Additionally, leading financial aid researchers Dr. Robert Kelchen of Seton Hall University, Dr. Douglas Webber of Temple University and Derek Price of DVP-Praxis will lend their collective expertise to this effort. The Hope Center’s project team includes Managing Director and Director of Research Dr. Christine Baker-Smith, Research Associate Dr. Tiffani Williams, and Senior Practitioner-Researcher Edward Conroy (a former financial aid practitioner).

Participants include:

- Amarillo College
- West Texas A&M University
- El Paso Community College
- The University of Texas at El Paso
- Dallas County Community College District
- San Jacinto College

“We can’t effectively address affordability if we can’t accurately and reliably understand costs and need,” says Jesse O’Connell, strategy director for federal policy at Lumina. “This initiative presents a timely opportunity to work with institutions and support students in an effort to bridge that gap, while also informing policy at a critical moment for higher education.”

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About the Hope Center for College, Community, and Justice

Launched in 2018, the Hope Center is home to an action research team using rigorous research to drive innovative practice, evidence-based policymaking, and effective communications to support #RealCollege students. Learn more at hope4college.com.

About Lumina Foundation

Lumina Foundation is an independent, private foundation in Indianapolis that is committed to making opportunities for learning beyond high school available to all. The foundation envisions a system that is easy to navigate, delivers fair results, and meets the nation’s need for talent through a broad range of credentials. Lumina’s goal is to prepare people for informed citizenship and for success in a global economy.