



## **Core Components of the Keys to Degrees Model**

### **1) *Education for Two-Generations at a Time***

The most essential component of the Keys to Degrees model is full-time enrollment in education for both parent and child.

Parents are enrolled in full-time college degree programs at the host institution, supporting the completion of a bachelor's degree in a maximum time frame of 5 years.<sup>1</sup> Simultaneously the students' child(ren) maintain full-time enrollment in high quality early childhood education programs or public school and afterschool enrichment programs, as appropriate for the age of the child.

Each Keys to Degrees program oversees placement of all participants' children in affordable high quality early childhood education programs. Programs may use on or off-campus childcare options. Programs also use diverse strategies to ensure affordability of childcare to student families including: C-CAMPIS programs, institutionally funded childcare subsidies or scholarships, Head Start partnerships, use of state or county voucher programs, etc.

### **2) *Safe and Affordable Housing on or near Campus***

Programs provide the opportunity for the student to live with their child(ren) on or near campus year round either in modified residence hall buildings or apartments on-campus or within walking distance from campus.

### **3) *Year-Round Programming***

In addition to services provided during the academic year, Keys to Degrees programs allow students to maintain their housing year round. Summer programming and support may include coursework, employment, internships, and/or other opportunities that will help the student to use the summer periods to accelerate their degree completion and/or build his or her professional resume.

### **4) *Food Security***

Each Keys to Degrees program works to ensure food security for participating families using multi-faceted strategies that may include: a meal plan, free or reduced prices for children's meals on campus, or other strategies. Program staff also assist students in applying for and maintaining food assistance benefits such as SNAP, WIC, the USDA free/reduced school lunch program, and food pantry programs to help them cover the costs of additional meals.

### **5) *Monitoring Student Academic Progress***

The Keys to Degrees program director monitors participating students' progress in their degree program, as well as other goal areas. For those who need academic support, each program utilizes a strategy for connecting such students with tutoring and other academic resources.

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<sup>1</sup> Currently Keys to Degrees replication programs are only at four-year institutions, although the National Replication Program is interested in potential partnerships with two-year degree granting colleges that help graduates successfully transition to four-year degree programs and/or living wage jobs.

**6) *Assistance with Navigating On-Campus Resources & Community Assistance Supports***

Each Keys to Degrees program director serves as a liaison and advocate for the students in the program, directing them to existing support services for which the student is eligible, both on-campus and in the community. Examples include but are not limited to: career services, counseling and health services, institutional or external scholarships, public assistance benefits, state and/or local childcare assistance programs, etc.

**7) *Community Building & Support Among Students Within the Program***

Housing in close proximity with other Keys to Degrees families is a locus of community within the program. Students often develop close friendships with other Keys students and provide informal exchanges of support for one another such as occasional babysitting, carpooling, loaning household items, etc. The Keys to Degrees program helps to foster this sense of community for participating families through regular program-specific meetings and programming (e.g. workshops, for-credit courses, extra-curricular activities, group meetings, family-friendly activities/events, etc.).

**8) *Two-Way Mentoring***

Keys to Degrees students serve as advocates for other students with children and as mentors to young parents in high school and other single or low-income parents who aspire to complete a college education. The programs also works to connect each Keys student with a professional mentor, from the college or local community, who can help advise and support them as they develop their career knowledge and transition to career jobs or graduate school upon degree completion.

**9) *Transitional Supports***

Keys to Degrees program staff work with graduates to transition from college to their new lives with guidance and support in transitioning to off-campus housing, and with support in access to internship or employment services, and/or applying to graduate school or career employment.<sup>2</sup>

**Variations and Adaptations the Keys to Degrees Model**

Part of the Keys to Degrees model involves adapting to the context of the individual college or university and surrounding community in which the replication program is located. While all Keys to Degrees programs share the above 9 core components, the model also allows programs to vary and adapt the program in other ways: to better serve students and their families, to better fit within and adapt to the individual context of the institution, or due to other factors. Some examples of current variations are the name of the program (Dillard University calls their program *Keys to Success*), location and strategy regarding program childcare placement, supplemental programming, special events, and other program activities. Eligibility criteria also range among institutions: some programs exclusively serve young single parents while others have no age requirements; restrictions on the number and age of children allowed to live in the program also vary based on institutional context. Although all programs hold regular group meetings between students and staff, the nature of these meetings can be structured as a for-credit course, a regular meeting, or another format. We would be happy to discuss other possible variations or adaptations, that maintain the key components of the program, for perspective replication programs.

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<sup>2</sup> This may also include transitional services from a two-year college to a four-year university, should a two-year college decide to replicate Keys to Degrees on their campus in the future.