

BOOSTING EFFORTS TO RECRUIT LOW-INCOME STUDENTS

BU joins ATI, an alliance of universities with a shared commitment



very well with our commitment to bring a more diverse student body to Boston University,” he says. “They also align with our commitment to fully fund Pell Grant students admitted to Boston University.”

Kelly Walter, associate vice president for enrollment and dean of admissions, agrees that ATI’s goals align almost perfectly with several strategic enrollment initiatives the University recently launched, including the Cohen Scholars Program, BU Scholarship Assurance, and partnerships with the College Advising Corps and the Posse Foundation.

“Although affordability and access have always been important priorities for BU,” says Walter (Wheelock’81), “we have expanded our efforts over the past few years. In fact, BU is already making progress toward ATI’s primary goal, as the percentage of low-income students in our freshman class increased from 13.3 percent in fall 2015 to 17.4 percent in fall 2018.

Elizabeth Pisacreta, ATI’s project colead, says the initiative does not require specific actions from its member institutions. Rather, each member school determines students’ financial need using either a federal methodology or its own institutional methodology; some schools use both. ATI measures its own progress, she says, by counting the number of students enrolled who receive federal, need-based Pell Grants. Pisacreta says ATI pays close attention to the goals and strategies of member institutions, and it shares with all members those practices that are most effective. **ART JAHNKE**

AS PART OF ITS EXPANDING effort to diversify its student body, Boston University has joined the American Talent Initiative (ATI), an alliance of colleges and universities with a shared commitment to improve opportunities for students from low- and moderate-income households.

ATI research shows that each year, more than 50,000 low- and moderate-income community college students do not transfer to four-year schools, even though their grades suggest that they would thrive at a four-year institution. About 15,000 of those students have GPAs of 3.7 or higher. The same research found that most community college students say they would like to pursue a four-year degree, but only 14 percent attain a bachelor’s degree within six years. ATI hopes to support the graduation of an additional 50,000 low- and moderate-income students by 2025.

Founded two years ago by 30 of the nation’s most selective colleges and universities, the initiative is supported by the Bloomberg Philanthropies and

operates in collaboration with the Aspen Institute’s College Excellence Program and Ithaka S+R, a nonprofit service that helps the academic community navigate economic and technological change. ATI includes 108 colleges and universities, and hopes to expand its membership to all of the country’s 296 colleges and universities with six-year graduation rates consistently above 70 percent.

Currently, more than half of the students enrolled in those schools come from families in the top 20 percent of the national income distribution. A recently released ATI survey found that over the past two years, ATI member schools have increased their enrollment of students eligible for federal Pell Grants by 7,291, a figure that puts the initiative on track to meet its 50,000-student goal.

Robert A. Brown, BU president, says he is pleased that the University has joined ATI. “The goals of ATI align

BU is one of 108 member colleges and universities in the American Talent Initiative, a collaboration of institutions devoted to increasing the number of college graduates from low-income households.