

Cowen Institute awarded grant to create the New Orleans College & Career Attainment Network

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The Cowen Institute received a \$250,000 grant from the philanthropic foundation Carnegie Corporation of New York to launch and expand the New Orleans College & Career Attainment Network. Funding will also support the annual one-day Life After High School convening on postsecondary readiness and success. (Pictured from left to right) Alida Murray, Upward Bound college counselor; John White, former Louisiana State Superintendent of Education; Amanda Kruger Hill, Cowen Institute executive director; present scholarship awards to local students Ahrmoud Lewis, Brianna Claverie and Elesha Williams at the Life After High School event in 2019. (Photo provided by Cowen Institute)

New Orleans public school students have set their sights on higher education as a key pathway to opportunity and are applying to college in numbers unprecedented in our community. However, a precipitous decline in college persistence and graduation leaves staggering college attainment and opportunity gaps between young people from economically disadvantaged backgrounds and their middle- and upper-income peers.

Of the 40,000+ New Orleans public school students classified as economically disadvantaged (83 percent of the total population), only 61 percent of those go on to college and less than 15 percent eventually graduate with a degree, according to research conducted by the [Cowen Institute](#) at Tulane University. While there has been considerable improvement in the number of historically excluded students attending college, racial inequities persist in college access, persistence, degree attainment, and student loan debt.

To improve these outcomes, the Cowen Institute has spent the last decade building the New Orleans College and Career Counseling Collaborative, the College Persistence Collaborative, the Data Collaborative, and a citywide FAFSA Campaign. What began as a loose, ad hoc association of a handful of local guidance counselors looking to improve their practice, today the collaboratives draw participation from virtually every high school in the city. Through these efforts, the institute fosters collaboration and leads professional development for high school counselors, practitioners, and youth-serving organizations to increase college and career access, persistence, and success for New Orleans youth.

The Cowen Institute received a \$250,000 grant from the philanthropic foundation Carnegie Corporation of New York to transform these groups of high school counselors, advisers, and data managers into a citywide college attainment network, furthering the institute's work in creating accessible and actionable research and programming for postsecondary pathways to success.

Over the next two years, the project will launch and expand the [New Orleans College & Career Attainment Network \(NOLA CCAN\)](#). With support from the Carnegie Corporation of New York and the National College Attainment Network, the Cowen Institute will build on its existing success with data analysis and information-sharing, capacity-building, convening, and impactful programming to join the ranks of other established, cohesive statewide and regional college access networks.

NOLA CCAN will bring together partners in the various collaboratives it leads under a single organizational umbrella and fill specific gaps in the New Orleans college and career readiness and success landscape. It will also increase the institute's focus on policy change and data-driven continuous improvement as levers to increase postsecondary success for New Orleans youth. Membership to the National College Attainment Network through NOLA CCAN, finalized in 2022, provides the opportunity for the institute's practitioners to learn from other college attainment networks and for others to learn from and replicate what the institute is doing.

"This continued support allows us to equitably grant access to our local counselors who are doing the on-the-ground work, to build their capacity with training, workshops, and tools to support our students towards and through a best-fit postsecondary path," Cowen Institute Director of College and Career Success Mia Washington Gonzales said. "This could not be done without the generosity of the Carnegie Corporation of New York."

Funding will also support the annual one-day *Life After High School* convening on postsecondary readiness and success, with the goal of continuing the conversation around actionable plans for creating real change in the education and employment landscape. The event will take place on Tulane's campus at the Lavin-Bernick Center for University Life on December 4, 2023. Click [here](#) to learn more.

The event will facilitate the sharing of best practices and disseminate updated findings from the biannual [Life After High School report](#), which analyzes the educational and employment outcomes for New Orleans students once they graduate from high school. The report includes an interactive website with extensive data visualizations, and a webinar to assist educators, public officials, and the community at-large to better understand how to use the data in their efforts to support public school students. The Carnegie Corporation has generously supported the institute's efforts around Life After High School since its inception in 2019.

"This grant empowers us to create systemic change, fostering higher education access and success for New Orleans youth through the New Orleans College and Career Attainment Network and our annual Life After High School convenings," stated Dr. Amanda Kruger Hill, executive director of the Cowen Institute. "We deeply appreciate Carnegie Corporation of New York's enduring and impactful support."

Carnegie Corporation of New York was established in 1911 by Andrew Carnegie to promote the advancement and diffusion of knowledge and understanding. Its core

program areas are education, international peace, and a strong democracy. A steadfast supporter of Tulane, Carnegie Corporation has gifted over \$7 million dollars to the university since 1953, working together in partnership to ensure that American public education is preparing *all* students, no matter the circumstances of their birth, with the knowledge, skills, and dispositions they need to fully participate in democracy and thrive in the global economy.