



Press Release

Why Free Community College Could Be a Futile Effort

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President Biden’s American Families Plan (AFP) proposes one of the largest federal investments in higher education in recent memory: making two years of community college free for first-time students. In a new analysis, AAF’s Data and Policy Analyst Tom Lee argues that while this plan would increase access to community college, it does nothing to address the poor outcomes and low completion rates of community colleges.

His central points:

- Community colleges have the lowest graduation rates of any post-secondary institution type, with about 60 percent of community college students failing to earn a degree or credential in six years;
- Given this high rate of non-completion, only \$44 billion of the AFP’s proposed \$109 billion combined federal and state investment would result in a degree or credential; the majority – \$65 billion – would essentially be a loss; and
- Moreover, as the AFP’s proposal does not address the causes of low completion rates and poor outcomes, by making community college “free” it could instead worsen both.

[Read the analysis.](#)