

Complete College America and NACADA: The Global Community for Academic Advising Launch Effort to Boost On-Time Completion Rates, Reduce Student Debt

INDIANAPOLIS – *Complete College America* and *NACADA: The Global Community for Academic Advising* announced today a joint effort to boost on-time completion rates and reduce student loan debt in partnership with the nation’s academic advisors. The initiative taps academic advisors to play a more integral role in college completion efforts and encourages participation in *15 to Finish* campaigns that increase credit accumulation and provide students critical information about on-time completion.

As part of the announcement, the two organizations released *Shared Principles for Boosting On-Time Graduation*, outlining the challenges facing today’s students and the role advisors can play in the solution. Data show that most full-time American college students do not graduate on time – just 40% of full-time students at four-year, flagship institutions and 20% at four-year, non-flagship institutions graduate in four years; 29% of full-time students at two-year institutions graduate in two years. Additionally, [most full-time students are not earning the credits needed each academic year to graduate on time.](#)

15 to Finish campaigns provide students clear information about the consequences of graduating late – including increased loan debt and lost wages – and encourage them to take at least 15 credits per semester or one-half of required credits for community colleges and one-quarter of required credits for four-year institutions (including summers) to ensure on-time completion. Additionally, research has shown that students who take at least 15 credits per semester are not only more likely to complete, they [do better academically and are more likely to be retained year over year.](#) The result is a win-win for students and the schools they attend: better grades and faster completion for students and higher enrollments for colleges. *15 to Finish* initiatives also help drive other changes, including scheduling solutions and financial incentives, to ensure institutions and systems are doing their part to make increased credit accumulation possible for their students.

“There’s a glaring disconnect in American higher education: Most students tell us they want to graduate on time, but too few finish enough college courses each year – including summers - to do so,” said Complete College America Interim President Tom Sugar. “This vital partnership with academic advisors will empower these frontline leaders with tools and strategies to help more students accomplish more college credits each year, saving themselves and their families millions of dollars and making the dream of a college degree much more likely.”

“It is essential that advisors provide learning experiences for students by teaching them why taking 15 hours is important, but also helping them prepare for the study habits and time management needed to take this full load,” said NACADA Executive Director Charlie Nutt. “Teaching students how to develop proactive plans for being successful when taking 15 credits is the key role for academic advisors – not just informing students to register for these credits. This

teaching role for academic advisors is essential in the success of all students in higher education today.”

While not all students will be able to take 15 credits per semester, providing critical information about what it takes to graduate on time ensures students are making informed decisions about course loads, their time to degree and the costs associated with their academic pathway. Additionally, results from around the country show that many more students could be taking the credits needed to graduate on time. The University of Hawai'i System – where *15 to Finish* originated – has doubled the percentage of first-time freshmen who enroll in 15 or more credits in their first semester. Since launching their initiative, Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis has increased the percentage of first-time, full-time students taking 15 credits from 28% in 2012 to 69% in 2016.

The new partnership will provide resources, campaign materials and technical assistance to NACADA's more than 12,000 members, building upon the 13 state-wide and more than 120 campus-based *15 to Finish* initiatives that are currently under way.

You can view Complete College America's new *15 to Finish* campaign video [here](#). For additional materials, visit [our website](#).

About Complete College America

Established in 2009, Complete College America is a national nonprofit with a single mission: to work with states to significantly increase the number of Americans with quality career certificates or college degrees and to close attainment gaps for traditionally underrepresented populations. For more information, visit our website (<http://www.completeclege.org/>).

About NACADA: The Global Community for Academic Advising

NACADA promotes student success by advancing the field of academic advising globally. We provide opportunities for professional development, networking, and leadership for our diverse membership. Learn more at <http://www.nacada.ksu.edu/>.