

# **Metro Academies College Success Program**

## **Report on Proposed Use of Funds**

**Coordinating Institution:** San Francisco State University  
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San Francisco, CA 94132-4161  
415.338.2708

**Application Number:** 41

**Participants:** City College of San Francisco; California State University System;  
California Community College System; Diablo Valley College;  
Skyline College

### **Introduction**

The Committee on Awards for Innovation in Higher Education awarded \$3 million to San Francisco State University, the coordinating institution for an application on behalf of the Metro College Success Program and related policy reforms. In this report, we discuss goals for use of funds, highlighting how they relate to state priorities, followed by an explanation of intended use of funds, and then a timeline.

We describe how our plans for one-time use of Innovation funding fit into our overall strategies for the Metro College Success Program. SF State will receive the award monies and serve as fiscal administrator, allocating funds to our partner college, City College of San Francisco (CCSF), as well as our other community college partners and partnering Cal State Universities (CSUs). We are now in the process of negotiating state Equity funds to provide stable funding for additional Metros at CCSF, and we provided technical assistance to Diablo Valley College's recent proposed for Equity Funds to start Metro Academies on their campus.

### **Metro College Success Program Description**

Founded in 2007, the Metro College Success program aims to increase timely transfer and graduation rates by redesigning the first two years of college, the time of heaviest attrition for disadvantaged students. Metro was the outgrowth of a long-standing partnership between SF State and City College since 1992.

The Metro College Success Program sets up Metro Academies centered on broad career or topical themes such as Health or Science. Each academy creates a personalized educational home for up to 140 students, via three components: (1) a guided pathway of general education courses required for all 289 majors in the CSU, with students taking two linked classes together each semester over four semesters, cohort-style; (2) student services anchored in these courses; and (3) a 45-hour Metro faculty development process. We recruit from high schools and neighborhoods serving large numbers of students who are low-income, underrepresented and/or first-generation college-going students. City College and SF State operate separate, closely aligned Metros. After completing their first two years at either the community college or university, Metro students converge at SF State as juniors.

Metro has a consistent six-year track record of sharply boosting timely graduation and transfer for disadvantaged students. Nearly all Metro students start college placing at one to three semesters below college-ready. However, at SF State, the aggregate results for the academies of Health, Child Development and Science show that, as Metro students enter their senior year, they outperform their more advantaged peers—all other first-time full-time freshmen (FTFTF)—by 12 percentage points (76% persistence for Metro students vs. 64% of all FTFTF). Metro/Health, the most mature academy, graduates students in four years at double the rate of similar Pell-eligible students not in Metro (24 vs. 12%). At City College’s Metro flagship, Metro students are nearly three times as likely to be transfer-prepared within three years, versus a comparison group of similar non-Metro students matched on eight variables (54% vs. 21%).

A rigorous 2013 cost efficiency study showed that Metro produces measurable cost reductions of \$22,714 per community college graduate or transfer student, and \$17,879 per CSU graduate.

## **Innovation**

The Metro College Success Program is innovative because it reconfigures the first two years of college to provide a comprehensive approach that addresses root causes of attrition that particularly affect disadvantaged students. It speeds progress to transfer and to a bachelor’s degree by providing a course pathway that reduces the likelihood of students taking excess units. It helps underprepared students rapidly build foundational academic skills (writing, math, critical thinking and oral communication) through carefully designed courses that progressively build these skills while engaging students early in their chosen fields of interest. It provides a structured, intensive faculty development process, preparing instructors to use high-impact educational practices that have been found to produce quantifiable results for low-income and underrepresented students. It bases student services, including academic advising and tutoring, in core classes. It is designed to be scaled up and sustained throughout California community colleges and universities. The following plan includes technology innovations, such as the use of automatic alerts and reminders and online advising.

## Goals for Use of Awards Funds

The Metro College Success Program has five goals that respond to the state’s three priorities and the Awards Committee’s aims.

| Awards for Innovation Aims  | Metro College Success Program Goals   |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase the number of bachelor’s degrees awarded.</li> <li>• Allow students to complete bachelor’s degrees within four years.</li> <li>• Improve equity in college completion.</li> </ul> | <p>I. Scale up Metro Academies in our home institutions—SF State and City College—while further developing the infrastructure and technology innovations needed to support broader scale up and cost effectively disseminate to other interested CSUs and state community colleges.</p> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Accomplish improved rates of timely transfer and bachelor’s degree completion in a sustainable and cost-effective way.</li> </ul>  | <p>II. Complete a cost-efficiency study on scaled-up Metro Academies, to re-test the hypothesis that Metro produces a net cost reduction per graduate. Discuss practical implications for institutional budgeting.</p>  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ease transfer through the state’s education system.</li> <li>• Improve equity in college completion</li> </ul>   | <p>III. Pilot, evaluate, and, if warranted promote two policy changes to ease transfer and increase timely graduation: An affiliate campus relationship, and 100% associate degrees for transfer students.</p>  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase the number of bachelor’s degrees awarded.</li> <li>• Allow students to complete bachelor’s degrees within four years.</li> <li>• Increase transfer.</li> </ul>                    | <p>IV. Implement the first phase of statewide scale-up by providing proactive technical assistance to disseminate Metro to two community colleges and up to three CSUs.</p>   |
|   | <p>V. Assess ongoing progress on goals, objectives and outcomes using technology tools such as database/ dashboards; tracking of contacts with students; increasing on-line advising capacity; and (at SF State) student portfolios.</p>  |

Next, we discuss plans for Innovation Awards funding. In keeping with the direction from the Innovation Awards committee, we intend for this to be a flexible plan. As we review progress, we will determine if we need to make changes in our plan, based on unexpected challenges or opportunities.

## Description of Expenditures

### Notes Regarding One-Time Use of Funds

We are very clear that Innovation Awards funds must be used for one-time purposes. Our approach is to use Innovation funds for one-time costs including:

1. One-time investment in the expansion of Metro Academies at City College – to be used in conjunction with institutional and anticipated Student Equity funding, and in the expansion of Metro Academies at SF State, to be used in combination with existing US Department of Education and CSU funding. This will include training for a new corps of faculty to lead the expanded number of Metro Academies within our home institutions.
2. One-time investment in infrastructure and technology that will support expansion and broad scale-up.
3. One-time curriculum development.
4. A one-time cost-efficiency study to update the one carried out in 2013.
5. The establishment of the Metro Leadership Council at City College.
6. Technical assistance for our dissemination partners—CSUs and community colleges that will start their own Metros.

We plan to tap other funds for ongoing program costs such as required general education (GE) courses and for core staff who operate Metro Academies. Our home institutions have allocated GE courses for Metro students (these are already on general funds) and Student Success Award funding from the CSU Chancellor’s Office provides ongoing funding for core staff.

We anticipate that our expanded cost efficiency study will again show that the small additional cost of Metro is far outweighed by the cost reductions flowing from sharply reduced attrition, much more timely graduation, and—at the community college—from sharply reduced excess units.

**Goal I:** Scale up Metro Academies in our home institutions—SF State and City College—while further developing the infrastructure and technology innovations needed to support broader scale up and cost effectively disseminate to other interested CSUs and CCs.

#### A. Scale-up at SF State and City College

We will launch two new academies in 2015, use 2016 as a year for one-time technology infrastructure development, and launch three more academies in 2017. With the current 7 academies, there will be 12 academies in place at SF State by academic year 2017-18. Our long-term vision is to offer Metro to all Pell-eligible first-time full-time freshmen (FTFTF). Innovation funding enables us to take a very important step toward this goal.

At City College, we will launch one new academy in fall of 2015, two more academies in 2016-17, and two more academies in 2017-18. There will be six academies in place at City College by academic year 2017-18.

At weekly meetings, Metro’s leadership team is currently in negotiation with City College leaders regarding how ongoing Equity funding can be used to support the planned scale-up of Metro Academies. We will take our proposal to the vice chancellor of academic affairs Susan Lamb for approval.

We will use a well-established start-up process to expand the number of academies. Our start-up process involves working with appropriate deans/department chairs to designate the broad Metro career topic or theme (such as Metro Academy of Health), selecting and training the Metro coordinator (a faculty person who leads each academy), selecting Metro faculty and training faculty them through a 45-hour structured development process, preparing Metro core courses, and recruiting students.

At City College, we will develop a City College Metro Leadership Council by fall 2015, involving vice chancellors, deans and chairs from all relevant units in regular ongoing meetings to review results and guide Metro’s expansion. This will parallel the Metro Leadership Council already in place at SF State. Setting this up is basically a matter of organizing a series of meetings.

## B. Infrastructure and Technology Development

To ensure that Metro can be scaled and sustained within SF State and across the CSUs, and expanded at City College and other state community colleges, we plan to make a one-time investment in infrastructure. We will use technology in innovative ways to streamline Metro workflow in student assessment, counseling and communication with our students. We will base this work at SF State and adapt it to City College, then incorporate it into future dissemination work. We will also complete fundamental curriculum work for expansion.

Today, we have many elements of a successful student experience in place.

- **Recruitment:** We reach out to students in schools and neighborhoods that serve our targeted populations—low-income, underrepresented, and/or first-generation college-goers. We guide students through the process of applying to both our home institutions, and the Metro program. We proactively help students prepare for placement tests.
- **Enrollment:** At SF State, we code Metro students, enabling them to automatically register in two linked core Metro courses per semester over four semesters. (City College uses a more manual process).
- **Faculty Development:** We have prepared Metro faculty to use high-impact educational practices in their instruction.
- **Curriculum:** We guide Metro faculty in adapting two linked general education courses over four semesters to ensure that the courses help students systematically development academic foundation skills (writing, critical thinking, math and oral communication), and include time to help students arrange access to academic counseling and other services. The first linked course includes a “first-year experience” component that prepares students for their college career and introduces them to their field of study.

- **Student Services:** Today, Metro has dedicated advisors who meet with Metro students throughout their four semesters in the program. We have set up a cost-effective way of accomplishing this, by using trained graduate interns who are supervised by a professional advisor. Student services also include tutoring by trained Metro tutors (student employees, often students who completed Metro). We provide strong guidance on use of financial assistance, and on procedures for transferring from City College to SF State. As noted, student services are based in Metro classes.
- **Assessment and Early Intervention:** We prepare Metro instructors to assess student performance and intervene early if students begin to falter. We are in the process of developing a student database that will allow us to send automated reminders and messages, and are building dashboards to monitor student outcomes within and across academies.

With a fully-developed infrastructure, we will have the following technology and process improvements in place to enhance the efficiency of our existing structure:

- **Automated alerts and reminders.** A growing body of research suggests that small behavioral nudges—such as reminders to meet financial aid deadlines or meet with advisors—can have a strong impact on student success. Today, various Metro personnel provide reminders to students, and Metro instructors work together to identify early signs that students are faltering—for example, missing deadlines.

We plan to automate alerts and reminders. This will involve documenting all key steps that students need to complete, from their first application through their coursework and meetings with advisors; then implementing an automated messaging system in our student management database. Students will receive automatic prompts reminding them of actions they need to take. Metro coordinators—the faculty who lead each academy—will receive automated warning alerts.

We will also set up protocols for handling common student problems. Today, when students falter, Metro coordinators and instructors determine case-by-case solutions, such as requiring that the student uses tutoring. After preparing protocols, we will train all relevant staff.

- **Card swiping system.** Today, students use sign-in sheets to record class attendance and meetings with advisors and tutors. We plan to replace this with a card swiping system. Automating this data will save data entry and allow us to quickly monitor early warning signs so we can intervene.
- **Block enrollment.** Enrolling students in courses as a cohort still requires time-consuming communication about scheduling and course locations. We will work out procedures and technology to make this easier.

- **Student employees.** We will expand our existing use of student employees or coaches in recruitment and tutoring. We will systematize our coach training procedures.
- **Online advising.** An online advising system will extend the reach of advisors and allow us to scale up more efficiently. We plan to pilot a new institutional online advising system that will allow students to gauge their progress toward their major, and shift to a related major when needed (for example, if they fail a gatekeeper course required for a major such as Engineering). The system will also send automated alerts to Metro advisors.
- **Use of Campus System to assess student outcomes.** SF State has implemented a new Campus System to house institutional data. Metro staff need one-time training on how to use the full capabilities of this system, particularly on how to make queries.
- **Curriculum Development.** The most mature academies have a very well-developed first-year experience course. For example, they not only cover basic college study and time management skills, they also include an introduction to important questions within the student's field of interest—such as social justice issues within engineering or public health. Newer academies' first-year experience courses are not as complete and do not include an introduction to the students' field of interest. We plan a one-time development of a complete template for the first-year experience course, including syllabi, assignments, grading rubrics and other materials, so that all academies—newer academies in our home institutions and dissemination partners—can quickly incorporate these for use in their programs.

**Goal II: By 2017, complete a cost-efficiency study on scaled-up Metro Academies, to re-test the hypothesis that Metro produces a net cost reduction per graduate. Discuss practical implications for institutional budgeting.**

- A. We plan to follow the same approach as in our 2013 cost efficiency study, when we worked with a consultant with the Research and Planning Group for California Community Colleges.

**Goal III: By 2018, pilot, evaluate, and, if warranted, promote policy changes to ease transfer and increase timely graduation.**

- A. By 2016, we will formalize and pilot an affiliate campus relationship between City College and SF State so that Metro transfers automatically have guaranteed admission with full junior status, including in selected impacted majors. This will involve a series of meetings between Metro's leadership and the leadership on both campuses to set up the pilot, and develop communications and procedures for transferring students.
- B. By 2016, pilot a policy change requiring 100% of Metro transfer students to obtain an associate's degree on exit from City College. This will involve a series of meetings between Metro's leadership and CCSF Advisors and then communications to Metro faculty, its advisors, and transferring/graduating students.

- C. By 2017, we will work with City College’s Institutional Research department to assess the impact of these changes.
- D. By 2018, pending positive results, we will work with the California Community College (CCC) and California State University (CSU) system to promote broad adoption of these policies. We have built strong relationships with the Chancellor’s Offices of both systems, and they have signed letters of support for these pilots. Metro leaders will keep leaders of these two systems informed. If results warrant, we will work in consultation with them to prepare and dissemination briefing papers to state CSUs and community colleges, encouraging them to adopt these policies.

**Goal IV: By 2018, implement the first phase of statewide scale-up by providing proactive technical assistance to disseminate Metro to two community colleges and up to three CSUs.**

We plan for dissemination to occur in two waves: first, combining City College’s Metro expansion with dissemination to Skyline College and Diablo Valley College (DVC) in 2015-2016, and then working with up to three CSUs to start their Metros in 2016-2017.

- A. Regarding Skyline College and DVC: Both have signed letters of intent to start their own Metro College Success Programs. As of March 2015, DVC has prepared a proposal for Equity funding to support this. We are targeting fall of 2015 for leaders at Skyline and DVC to determine their readiness to start up their own Metro Academies in the fall of 2016. We plan to provide technical assistance and start-up training to Skyline, DVC and City College, working as a cluster.

We plan to implement technical assistance to start up new academies in the spring and summer of 2016. Technical assistance will consist of:

- A three-day Metro Institute to provide participants with an overview of how Metro works, and an explanation of major tracks of activities, including:
  - Start-up processes—gaining and documenting agreements and expectations; selecting faculty to lead and teach in new academies; determining the broad career/topical theme for the new academies
  - Faculty development, including curriculum development
  - Student services integration into Metro classes
  - Recruitment—developing recruitment pipelines and materials
  - Student and program evaluation.
- Involving leaders from Skyline, DVC and City College’s new academies in already-occurring sessions including Metro coordinator training, faculty development, recruitment planning, etc.
- Conference calls to address questions and issues.

Our technical assistance will be very similar to the assistance we’ve provided to leaders of new academies within our home institutions.

- B. We envision following a similar process for up to three new CSUs. We will identify participating CSUs by the fall of 2016 and advising them on obtaining start-up funding, implementing a similar preparation/technical assistance phase as for the community colleges, and having new Metro students start classes by the fall of 2017.
- C. As we have expanded Metro in our home institutions, we have documented processes, work samples, and templates for all aspects of Metro (for example, recruitment and faculty development processes) in a 300 page Toolkit supplemented by 900 pages of curriculum materials. This toolkit, developed in 2012, needs to be updated and expanded to a version 3.0; we will accomplish this during 2015-17.

**Goal V: Assess ongoing progress on goals, objectives and outcomes using technology tools such as database/dashboards; tracking of contacts with students; increasing on-line advising capacity; and (at SF State) student portfolios.**

- A. Metro has placed a strong emphasis on measuring student outcomes, focusing on transfer and four-year graduation rates, and using persistence as an intermediate indicator of student progress. We have worked with Institutional Research Offices to establish basic processes for pulling relevant student data from institutional databases, and comparing Metro students' performance to similar non-Metro students. We report on outcomes annually, and view this as the essential foundation for the consistent support we have gotten for institutionalization, even during periods of budget contraction. Metro was the first program in the University to employ electronic portfolios with freshmen and sophomores. E-portfolios serve as our platform to collect academic work and for the program to evaluate student learning outcomes, using rubrics developed by the American Association of Colleges and Universities.

We are now in the process of implementing a student management database (using Salesforce). By 2015, we will include the use of Innovation Awards funding to complete this one-time implementation of the basic student database management system. City College and SF State will be able to prepare queries and reports; tracking of key student performance indicators and automated notifications and reminders will be in place.

- B. By 2017, with Innovation Awards funding, we will complete implementation of advanced technology interfaces with features such as portals that allow students to easily track their grades and credits.
- C. An SF State faculty team will assess and quantify Metro's impact on critical thinking and writing skills, completing a pilot assessment in 2015 and ongoing annual assessments thereafter. Innovation Awards funding will support the one-time pilot assessment. In the spring of 2015, new Metro students completed a signature (or final) writing assignment that targets specific student learning outcomes, repeating the same assignment in their fourth semester. This summer, a trained faculty team will evaluate a random sample of these pre- and post- writing assignments, using national writing and critical thinking evaluative rubrics. They will produce a score indicating Metro students' writing improvement.

D. At SF State, a research study is underway to measure how psychosocial factors, such as a sense of belonging in college, and social support from peers and staff, affect persistence. An SF State researcher has designed a study that will use student responses to the National Survey of Student Engagement and other psychometric tools, to be completed in 2016. We will use findings to improve the program and to publish.

**Timeline for Metro College Success Program**

|   | AY 2015-16 |      |        | AY 2016-17 |      |        | AY 2017-18 |      |        | AY 2018-19 |      |        |
|---|------------|------|--------|------------|------|--------|------------|------|--------|------------|------|--------|
|   | Sum        | Fall | Spring |
| <b>I. Scale up Metro Academies in our home institutions while further developing the infrastructure and technology innovations needed to support broader scale-up and cost-effectively disseminate to other CSUs and CCs.</b> |            |      |        |            |      |        |            |      |        |            |      |        |
| <i>Scale up at San Francisco State University.</i>  |            |      |        |            |      |        |            |      |        |            |      |        |
| 1. Complete preparation for 2 new Metros to enroll students in fall 2015 (Metros #8-9).   |            |      |        |            |      |        |            |      |        |            |      |        |
| 2. Prepare for 3 new fall 2017 Metros (Metros #10-12).  |            |      |        |            |      |        |            |      |        |            |      |        |
| 3. Student cohorts start classes in Metros #10-12.  |            |      |        |            |      |        |            |      |        |            |      |        |
| <i>Scale up at City College.</i>  |            |      |        |            |      |        |            |      |        |            |      |        |
| 4. Complete preparation for a new Metro Academy of STEM which will enroll students in fall 2015.  |            |      |        |            |      |        |            |      |        |            |      |        |
| 5. Finalize plans regarding the use of Student Equity funds to support scale-up of Metro at City College.   |            |      |        |            |      |        |            |      |        |            |      |        |
| 6. Prepare for 2 new fall 2016 Metros (Metros #3 and 4).  |            |      |        |            |      |        |            |      |        |            |      |        |
| 7. Student cohorts start classes in Metros #3 & #4.   |            |      |        |            |      |        |            |      |        |            |      |        |
| 8. Prepare for 2 new fall 2017 Metros (Metros #5 & #6).   |            |      |        |            |      |        |            |      |        |            |      |        |
| 9. Student cohorts start classes in Metros #5-6.  |            |      |        |            |      |        |            |      |        |            |      |        |
| 10. Develop City College Metro Leadership Council.  |            |      |        |            |      |        |            |      |        |            |      |        |
|   |            |      |        |            |      |        |            |      |        |            |      |        |

|  | AY 2015-16 |      |        | AY 2016-17 |      |        | AY 2017-18 |      |        | AY 2018-19 |      |        |
|--|------------|------|--------|------------|------|--------|------------|------|--------|------------|------|--------|
|  | Sum        | Fall | Spring |
| <b><i>Strengthen Metro infrastructure and introduce technology innovations to support future scale-up to serve 100% of low-income first-time freshmen.</i></b> |            |      |        |            |      |        |            |      |        |            |      |        |
| 11. Implement automated alerts and reminders, card swiping system, streamlined block enrollment, early intervention and training.                              |            |      |        |            |      |        |            |      |        |            |      |        |
| 12. Participate in SF State’s institutional investigation of an online advising system. Pilot the system and then advise on use with other institutions.       |            |      |        |            |      |        |            |      |        |            |      |        |
| 13. Complete training on Campus System to take advantage of all features.  |            |      |        |            |      |        |            |      |        |            |      |        |
| 14. Complete one-time development of templates and sample materials for first-year experience course.  |            |      |        |            |      |        |            |      |        |            |      |        |
| <b>II. Complete a cost-efficiency study on scaled-up Metro Academies.</b>  |            |      |        |            |      |        |            |      |        |            |      |        |
| 15. Hire external evaluator and carry out work.  |            |      |        |            |      |        |            |      |        |            |      |        |
| 16. Complete study in 2017.  |            |      |        |            |      |        |            |      |        |            |      |        |
| <b>III. Demonstrate and evaluate policy changes.</b>   |            |      |        |            |      |        |            |      |        |            |      |        |
| 17. Plan and pilot “affiliate campus” relationship between City College and SF State.  |            |      |        |            |      |        |            |      |        |            |      |        |
| 18. Pilot requirement that all Metro students obtain associate degree on exit from City College.   |            |      |        |            |      |        |            |      |        |            |      |        |
| 19. Evaluate outcomes of policy changes.   |            |      |        |            |      |        |            |      |        |            |      |        |
| 20. If warranted, work with system Chancellor’s Offices to promote broader adoption in the CCC/CSU.  |            |      |        |            |      |        |            |      |        |            |      |        |
| <b>IV. Implement the first phase of statewide scale-up.</b>  |            |      |        |            |      |        |            |      |        |            |      |        |
| 21. Complete negotiations and establish timeline for Skyline and Diablo Valley College (DVC) to  |            |      |        |            |      |        |            |      |        |            |      |        |

|  | AY 2015-16 |      |        | AY 2016-17 |      |        | AY 2017-18 |      |        | AY 2018-19 |      |        |
|--|------------|------|--------|------------|------|--------|------------|------|--------|------------|------|--------|
|  | Sum        | Fall | Spring |
| fund and start up their own Metros. Coordinate this work with City College's Metro scale-up.   |            |      |        |            |      |        |            |      |        |            |      |        |
| 22. Implement six month technical assistance process for community college partners, then evaluate and assess needs.   |            |      |        |            |      |        |            |      |        |            |      |        |
| 23. DVC and Skyline identify new Metro students.   |            |      |        |            |      |        |            |      |        |            |      |        |
| 24. Student cohorts start classes at DVC, Skyline.   |            |      |        |            |      |        |            |      |        |            |      |        |
| 25. Identify interested CSU partners for Metro dissemination.  |            |      |        |            |      |        |            |      |        |            |      |        |
| 26. Implement six month technical assistance process for CSU partners.   |            |      |        |            |      |        |            |      |        |            |      |        |
| 27. New CSU Metro students start.  |            |      |        |            |      |        |            |      |        |            |      |        |
| 28. Complete Metro dissemination toolkit version 3.0.  |            |      |        |            |      |        |            |      |        |            |      |        |
| <b>V. Evaluate Metro College Success Program against goals.</b>  |            |      |        |            |      |        |            |      |        |            |      |        |
| 29. Prepare annual reports on transfer, 4-year graduation and persistence for review/ action by institutional leaders. Prepare required Innovations Awards reporting, 2018 and 2020. |            |      |        |            |      |        |            |      |        |            |      |        |
| 30. Complete implementation of basic student database.   |            |      |        |            |      |        |            |      |        |            |      |        |
| 31. Implement database advanced features.  |            |      |        |            |      |        |            |      |        |            |      |        |
| 32. Complete pilot assessment of Metro's impact on writing and critical thinking skills at SF State.   |            |      |        |            |      |        |            |      |        |            |      |        |
| 33. Implement ongoing assessments of writing/ critical thinking.   |            |      |        |            |      |        |            |      |        |            |      |        |
| 34. Complete impact study on how psycho-social factors affect Metro student success.   |            |      |        |            |      |        |            |      |        |            |      |        |



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April 7, 2015

Selection Committee  
Awards for Innovation in Higher Education  
California Department of Finance  
Education Systems Unit—Innovation Awards  
7<sup>th</sup> Floor  
915 L Street  
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Committee on Awards for Innovation in Higher Education:

As president of San Francisco State University, I am writing to express my support for the Metro College Success Program's report on proposed use of \$3 million in Innovation Award funds which centers on five goals:

- I. Demonstrate Metro's scalability and impact on transfer and four year graduation by investing in innovative technological and organization infrastructure to support an efficient scale up at our home institutions as well as at other interested CSUs and CCs.
- II. Complete a cost-efficiency study on scaled-up Metro Academies, to re-test the hypothesis that Metro produces a net cost reduction per graduate.
- III. Pilot, evaluate, and, if warranted, promote policy changes to ease transfer and increase timely graduation.
- IV. Implement the first phase of statewide scale-up by providing proactive technical assistance to disseminate Metro to two community colleges and up to three CSUs.
- V. Assess ongoing progress on goals, objectives and outcomes using technology tools such as database/dashboards and student electronic portfolios.

All of the proposed goals are realistic, based on Metro's track record. The Metro program has established strong processes for discerning interventions that work and rapidly starting up new academies. The application of the Innovation in Higher Education award will enable the team to investigate and pilot technological and organizations innovations that will streamline their work effort and assure efficient processes as the program goes to larger scale at both CCSF and SF State. The Metro team worked with a nationally prominent researcher to carry out a successful cost efficiency study, and has a solid template for carrying out a second study with a greater number of academies. The Metro leadership team has the experience, credibility and strong relationships with senior leaders in both our University and City College to carry out pilots and evaluations of two policy changes that will ease transfer. Metro has been designed from the start for scale-up, and has the relationships and technical assistance processes to disseminate to other institutions. Finally, the Metro leadership team has placed strong emphasis on measuring outcomes.

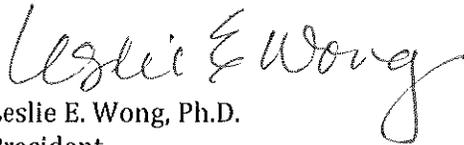
We have a strong foundation of effective evaluation tools and processes in place, with work underway to further develop those.

Metro's goals and plans squarely align with California's three priorities:

- Create the infrastructure with the one time funding afforded by the Innovation Grant to significantly increase the number of bachelor's degrees awarded.
- Allow more low income and underrepresented students to complete bachelor's degrees within four years after beginning higher education.
- Ease transfer through the state's education system by better recognizing learning that occurs across the state's education segments and elsewhere.

I fully support the Metro College Success Program's plans and look forward to seeing work funded by the Innovation Awards help a growing number of disadvantaged students to improve their college success.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Leslie E. Wong". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the printed name and title.

Leslie E. Wong, Ph.D.  
President  
San Francisco State University

## **Application to the Awards for Innovation in Higher Education**

### **Contact Information**

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### **Mail Check to**

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San Francisco, CA 94132

### **List of Participants**

San Francisco State University  
City College of San Francisco  
California State University System  
California Community College System  
Diablo Valley College  
Skyline College

### **Application Abstract**

San Francisco State University submits this application to the Awards for Innovation in Higher Education, on behalf of the Metro College Success Program and related policy reforms. Co-founded in 2007 with partner City College of San Francisco, Metro has a consistent six-year track record of sharply boosting timely graduation and transfer for disadvantaged students. A rigorous cost efficiency study showed that Metro produces measurable cost reductions of \$22,714 per community college graduate or transfer student, and \$17,879 per CSU graduate. Metro was developed to be scaled up and sustained throughout California community colleges and universities.

Metro is a comprehensive re-design of the first two years, the time of heaviest attrition for disadvantaged students. Each academy creates a personalized educational home for up to 140 students, via three components: (1) a guided pathway of general education courses required for all 289 majors in the CSU, with students taking two linked classes together each semester over four semesters, cohort-style; (2) student services anchored in those courses; and (3) a 45-hour Metro faculty development process. We are now operating nine highly successful demonstration sites at San Francisco State University and City College of San Francisco. By 2018, we will strengthen the program's infrastructure and significantly scale up Metro Academies at our home institutions. We will also initiate statewide scale-up, providing proactive technical assistance to disseminate the Metro approach to other interested community colleges and CSUs.