



OCTOBER 2018

PATHWAYS AT NATIONAL LOUIS UNIVERSITY

ORGANIZATIONAL ASSESSMENT

Overview

ABOUT

Pathways at National Louis University seeks to address the most critical barriers inhibiting bachelor's degree attainment for low-income students. Operating as a program within National Louis University, Pathways provides an innovative, student-centered, technology-enhanced bachelor's degree model at an affordable cost.

WHY WE INVESTED

Pathways at National Louis University (Pathways) provides critical wraparound supports that empower low-income, first generation college students to earn a bachelor's degree. Today, only 39 percent of comparable Chicago Public Schools (CPS) graduates earn a bachelor's degree within six years of completing high school. Through a student-centered model that provides an affordable, structured, and supportive environment, Pathways is working to close the bachelor's degree attainment gap between low-income students and their higher income peers. While the program is only entering its fourth year and outcomes are limited, early results are promising. The program's first class persisted into its second year at a rate of 78 percent, outpacing a 53 percent college persistence rate of a comparable CPS population. Leading Pathways is Aarti Dhupelia as National Louis University's Vice President of Undergraduate Education. Dhupelia is an experienced education leader with the unique ability to manage both people and outcomes. With her at the helm, we are confident that Pathways can accelerate students' academic performance and scale significantly over the next couple of years.



GRANTEE SINCE

2017

INVESTMENT TO DATE

\$442K

CURRENT NUMBER SERVED

814

LEADERSHIP

Aarti Dhupelia

Vice President, Undergraduate
Education

Our Assessment



PROGRAM

Pathways at National Louis University's (Pathways) early results show significant impact on student outcomes. The bachelor's degree program is based on four pillars designed to address the biggest needs facing low-income, first generation college students: 1) affordability; 2) structured pathways and flexible approach; 3) adaptive and personalized curriculum, and; 4) integrated instruction and support. While the program is only entering its fourth year, initial results are promising. Cumulative GPA at end of freshman year—a meaningful predictor of being on-track to graduate—has increased for each cohort. Additionally, Pathways is outperforming other institutions as its cohorts move into their third and fourth years of programming. Pathways' persistence outcomes for its earliest cohorts include 44 percent of its 2015 cohort persisting into senior year and 54 percent of its 2016 cohort persisting into junior year. While this suggests that improvement will be required to achieve the ambitious goal of 60 percent graduation, we believe Pathways will continue to make progress given the increase in GPA and efforts to increase student retention. We are confident the ambitious graduation goal of 60 percent is achievable given the program's research-backed model and the team's commitment to data-driven improvement.



LEADERSHIP

Aarti Dhupelia, leader of Pathways at National Louis University (Pathways) and National Louis University's newly established Undergraduate College, is both a visionary and operational leader who successfully guides program innovation and implementation. Since beginning her role in 2015, Dhupelia has made significant strides to establish her Pathways leadership team with individuals that are committed to driving program innovation based on data-driven insights. The management team is entering the second year of Leading for Impact (LFI), Bridgespan's two-year program to support ambitious nonprofits, and we believe the work with LFI is supporting the team's ability to collaboratively guide Pathways forward. As a program within a university, support from National Louis University's leadership is critical to Pathways success. National Louis University's president, Dr. Nivine Megahed, and Board of Trustees are avid supporters of the Pathways program. Dr. Megahed has proven to be a crucial advocate for Pathways, committing the necessary resources and championing the rapid growth and development of the program.

Our Assessment



OPERATIONS

Pathways at National Louis University (Pathways) intends to become a fully self-sustaining model in its fifth year, with student tuition and fees covering annual operating costs. To date, Pathways has successfully met its fundraising targets, which subsidize the gap between student fees and operating costs. Pathways has increased philanthropic revenue from \$593K in 2016 to over \$2.5M in 2018 for a total revenue of over \$9M. Looking forward, Pathways will sustain this revenue in 2019 and decrease in subsequent years to cover innovation and improvement costs only. We believe Pathways will successfully meet its fundraising targets given the strong trajectory to date, in addition to the momentum from the integration with the Undergraduate College and updated marketing to reflect the revised university brand. Pathways has been able to hire and retain mission-aligned staff and faculty with the necessary credentials, even as the program has grown rapidly. Looking forward, Pathways is focused on talent strategies to continue developing career advancement opportunities across functional areas. While retention has been strong, this is an area to stay ahead of as the program grows and integrates with the undergraduate college.



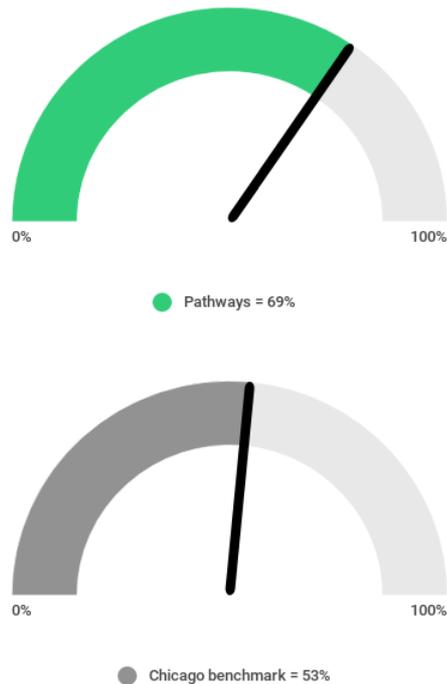
SCALE

When it launched in 2015, Pathways at National Louis University (Pathways) set an ambitious goal to grow from a cohort of 82 students to over 1,800 by Fall 2020. Pathways has made impressive progress in the ensuing years, growing to serve over 800 students in 2018, more than doubling the number of students served in 2017. Pathways is poised to serve over 1,200 students in 2019, with 4,500 applications received for the incoming class. We have confidence in Pathways' future growth given its track record to date, large addressable market and need from the program's target population. As Pathways builds its credibility as a four-year pathway for students, student recruitment strategy and retention will continue to be critical enablers of achieving scale targets.

Grantee Performance

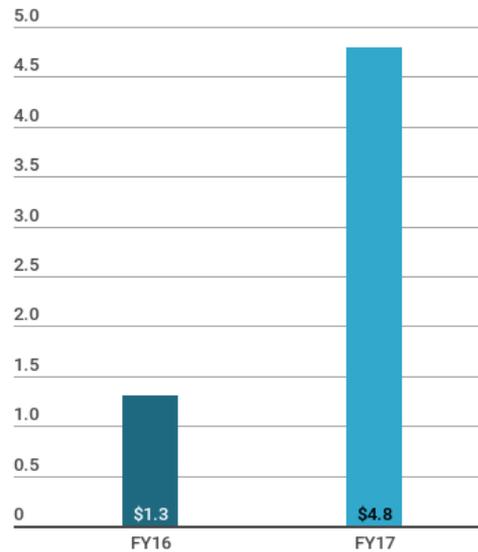
KEY OUTCOME

College persistence rate of college enrollees



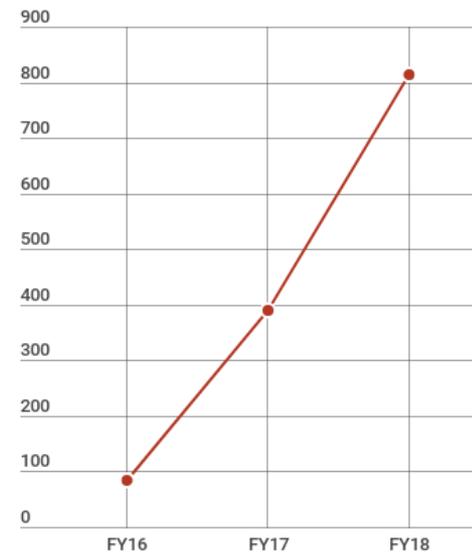
REVENUE

In millions



SCALE

Students served

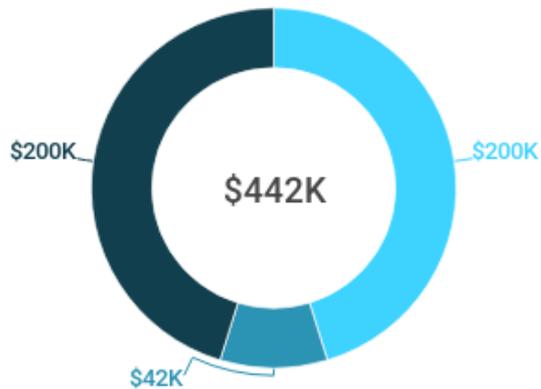


Note: Benchmark is based on Chicago data reflecting outcomes for students with academic credentials similar to Pathways students. Pathways' persistence rate represents retention of program participants at NLU, while the comparison benchmark includes persistence of enrollees at any institution (not necessarily institution originally attended)

Sources: National Louis University; National Clearinghouse

Our Impact

INVESTMENT TO DATE



● Monetary grants ● Management support ● Leveraged funding

MANAGEMENT SUPPORT HIGHLIGHTS

Leadership Development: Pathways at National Louis University's leadership team is participating in Leading for Impact®, a cohort-driven leadership development program run by the Bridgespan group. A Better Chicago is covering 75 percent of the fees.

Brand Strategy: Pathways worked with a consultant to develop a university brand strategy to support its marketing and communications efforts. A Better Chicago helped scope the project and covered 75 percent of the fees.

Contact Us

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