Extend a helping hand with a gift to the STUDENT SUCCESS CENTER

Fueled by our land-grant mission, Penn State is committed to opening our doors to qualified students from every background. Once they arrive at Penn State, students who are from low-income families, part of an under-represented group, or the first generation in their family to attend college may face unique challenges on their path to degree attainment. The Student Success Center exists to support these students as well as any student who may require additional assistance with navigating college.

Launched in 2019, the center provides support to undergraduate students across the Commonwealth, in partnership with advocates across the University, connecting students with timely resources and services to help them overcome barriers to success. The Student Success Center is contributing to a University-wide culture of care, in which all students understand that they do not have to navigate life’s challenges alone, and all faculty and staff share the responsibility of connecting students with the support they need to thrive.
The Complete Penn State program, a signature initiative of the center, assists students in the final one or two semesters of their first associate’s or bachelor’s degree. Ample research has shown the economic, social, and health benefits of completing a college degree. Complete Penn State extends a safety net and financial lifeline to students who experience real or perceived barriers to completing their degree. The program provides financial aid to students who have exhausted all other sources of aid and connects students with other key resources to assist them as they strive toward the graduation finish line. Each year, Complete Penn State helps hundreds of students to graduate, but students’ need still exceeds our capacity to help.

Beyond Complete Penn State, the Student Success Center envisions a range of programs to support students throughout their Penn State careers. We recently launched a first-year seminar to prepare students for success in college, and we are engaged in efforts to proactively identify students who are struggling academically and to extend a helping hand. However, turning the full scope of our plans into reality will be impossible without additional Student Success Center staff and other resources, from scholarships to programs, that will address student and center needs both immediately and far into the future.

To realize our vision of providing comprehensive support to the students who need it most, we are asking alumni, parents, and friends who believe in our mission to consider gifts to the following areas:

OPEN DOORS SCHOLARSHIPS
The Open Doors Scholarship Program amplifies the impact of initiatives such as Complete Penn State. When donors endow an Open Doors Scholarship with a preference for Complete Penn State, the fund generates financial support for Complete Penn State recipients every year in perpetuity. Donors can direct their support to students in a particular college or campus or opt to support students across the University.

COMPLETE PENN STATE AWARDS
Rather than creating an endowment, donors may choose to fund individual Complete Penn State awards. The entire balance of the gift is directed to students, rather than invested in an endowment, and the gift supports students in a single year, or over several years, rather than in perpetuity. By creating an annually funded award in support of Complete Penn State recipients, donors can have an immediate impact on students.
GIFTS TO THE ROB PANGBORN HONORARY FUND FOR THE STUDENT SUCCESS CENTER

A gift to this fund, named in honor of the retired vice president and dean for Undergraduate Education, will provide the center with funding to be used for a range of priorities and needs. Gifts to this fund could be used to advance initiatives such as establishing a student-alumni mentoring program, launching a speaker series focused on various facets of student success, and expanding Penn State’s participation in National First-Generation College Celebration, which highlights the unique experiences of first-generation college students.

#GIVINGTUESDAY MATCHING CHALLENGE

Each year on the Tuesday after Thanksgiving, Penn State participates in a national giving event known as #GivingTuesday. During this event, the University asks supporters to make gifts of any size in support of Penn State programs. A matching gift, which provides a pool of funds Penn State can use to match gifts from other donors, is an excellent way to marshal support for a particular program. By creating the first ever matching challenge in support of the Student Success Center or Complete Penn State program, a special donor can add extraordinary momentum to our #GivingTuesday campaigns.

ENDOWED POSITIONS

While Penn State already has capable staff available to support students at the college and campus levels, our growing understanding of the needs of underserved populations points to the need for University-wide coordination. This is where the Student Success Center can help. To fully realize our vision of student success, the Student Success Center will need to add additional staff to our team, which is currently composed of a director and a single student success coach. By creating an endowment to fully and permanently fund a position in our office—the directorship, a student success coach, or an administrative support assistant—a donor can help us to achieve and sustain the personnel capacity we require, despite future shifts in Penn State’s budget priorities, to support students throughout their Penn State careers.
Making a gift to the Student Success Center is extending a helping hand to talented, hard-working students for whom attending college is not a given, but a dream—one that can influence the course of their entire lives. We want these students to know they do not have to navigate life’s challenges alone. With support from Penn State donors and our staff, these students can grow in ways they never thought possible, earn their degrees, and form the foundation for fulfilling lives. Achieving this vision of comprehensive student support will not be possible without Penn State donors, so we thank you for considering this opportunity to give.

To learn more about how you can support the Student Success Center, please contact:
Undergraduate Education Development
The Pennsylvania State University
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State College, PA 16801
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814-865-6600

“My parents never had the opportunity to pursue higher education themselves, so they wanted to make sure I had that chance. Having now graduated from Penn State, I couldn’t be prouder of my accomplishments. To others who may be in a similar situation, I would tell them to chase their dreams and rest assured their hard work will pay off.”

—Fatih Celep

Fatih Celep is a Philadelphia native who, with support from Complete Penn State, earned his degree in computer engineering in May 2020.