

**Catholic Charities of Fort Worth  
Stay the Course Replication Project**

**Total: \$1,259,195**

**Project Period: 08/01/2019 to 07/30/2022**

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**Partners: Catholic Social Services (Lead)**



### **Project Overview**

Catholic Social Services (CSS) was one of three human services organizations nationally to be selected for a \$1.2M award to replicate *Stay the Course*, a case management program proven to increase community college students' persistence and degree completion rates. CSS will implement the program in partnership with Columbus State Community College to improve students' college persistence and degree completion.

*Stay the Course* helps students address personal, economic, and social barriers to college success through intensive case management and emergency financial assistance. The program was developed by Catholic Charities of Fort Worth and is evaluated by The University of Notre Dame's Wilson Sheehan Lab for Economic Opportunities (LEO). Preliminary results show that participants in *Stay the Course* are 25.2 percentage points more likely to persist in college than the comparison group and female participants in the program are 31.5 percentage points more likely to earn an Associate's Degree than the comparison group. Catholic Social Services and Columbus State will replicate the program and participate in the research study. CSS will add five employees to implement *Stay the Course*, and three will directly serve students on Columbus State's downtown campus.

Active students in the Stay the Course program will receive support services from Navigators to overcome personal and institutional barriers that threaten academic success through intensive case management, access to limited emergency financial assistance, and auxiliary services. Grantee will be required to implement and provide these program services as prescribed by the Stay the Course model.

Navigators will accomplish the goals of the Stay the Course program by adhering to the following program requirements:

- Meet with students in person bi-weekly;
- Engage in meaningful reciprocated contact with students weekly (phone, e-mail, text)
- Complete required program assessments as prescribed by the model;
- Collaborate with students to develop/update their SMART service plan each semester; and
- Work hand-in-hand with students to ensure progress is made towards goals on SMART service plan (i.e., completion of an action step every 21 days).

Active students in the Stay the Course program will have access to limited EFA for non-academic costs. Each student has access to a total of \$1,500 of EFA for the duration of the program with a maximum of \$500 per semester. EFA cannot be used for academic costs (e.g., tuition, books, school supplies) but, rather, is to be used for non-academic emergency financial issues that would impact a student's ability to persist in school.

In addition to intensive case management services and access to limited emergency financial assistance, the Stay the Course program hosts a variety of events for active students in the program, to increase/maintain student engagement, especially during breaks (i.e., summer, winter, spring) in the academic year. Grantee will be required to host at least one (1) engagement event for breaks that last longer than one (1) week.

Navigators will equip and prepare active students for discharge from the Stay the Course program by having intentional conversations during the student's final semester in school. Navigators will work together with students to develop an aftercare plan that provides the student with, at minimum, a list of potential resources that may be beneficial for the student in the future.