Stakeholder Perspectives illustrate how the framework can be used by various groups as a lens through which one understands and measures post-collegiate outcomes. In this document outcomes of primary interest to students and families are placed within the framework and additional connections are drawn to related, but sometimes less-considered, outcomes.

A college education is a significant investment for students and their families. The hoped-for return is an opportunity to do better than preceding generations – to live a better life, earn a better income, and have a better understanding of the world. Clear and measurable outcomes of this investment can help students and families as they engage in the college choice process and evaluate the value of different post-secondary options. The Post-Collegiate Outcomes (PCO) Framework (see Figure 1) with its comprehensive array of college outcomes along the public, personal, economic, and human capital continuua offers students and their families an opportunity to consider future returns on their investment in higher education and to obtain clarity on what to expect as a result of the college experience.

*Figure 1: PCO Framework*
Outcomes consistent with the economic continuum, both public and personal, are of primary interest to students and families when evaluating their return on investment in higher education. They want assurance that the time and resources spent in pursuit of a college experience are a good investment. Specifically, prospective and current students, alumni, and family members want to know how the graduate will be able apply what they learned during postsecondary studies, often expressed by the question of whether a recent graduate will be able to get a job that requires the credential they’ve earned. Some of the ways that public and personal economic outcomes like these can be measured and evaluated by student and families include:

- typical earnings of program completers by discipline and degree;
- employability of program completers; and
- student debt for program completers and non-completers.

Less-considered but equally important are the post-collegiate outcomes in the personal human capital quadrant. The focus here is on the effects of the knowledge, skills, and ways of making meaning acquired by the student through their postsecondary experiences. The associated outcomes incorporate personal intellectual growth (e.g., critical thinking ability, problem-solving skills), discipline- and occupation-specific skills, and interpersonal abilities needed for success in career and life.

Examples of metrics that could be used to examine personal human capital outcomes include:

- levels of career satisfaction;
- cultural competence;
- healthy lifestyle and improvements; and
- career advancement.

The public human capital quadrant captures the impact on society by those who pursue a postsecondary education. This may be the most elusive of the perspectives to concretely measure, and yet it is this set of outcomes that propels college graduates into the next phase of their lives with meaning and a sense of concern for succeeding generations. These outcomes are a result of students understanding themselves not only as positive contributing members of their own community but also as citizens of a global society. For example, the application of classroom learning within larger society and through philanthropic organizations is one of the most powerful contributions made by college students and graduates. The relationship between students and alumni and community-based organizations is mutually beneficial in that organizations are able to maintain a level of service not otherwise possible and students and alumni gain valuable experience applying their knowledge and skills for the benefit of others.
Outcomes associated with the public human capital quadrant can be calculated by:

- charitable donations;
- engagement in volunteerism and community service; and
- voter participation.

By using the PCO Framework as a lens through which to understand and measure the outcomes of a postsecondary education, students and families can see that their future returns on investment extend beyond job placement and compensation to include other results of the college experience such as personal and professional development and application of learning for the benefit of others. Using this information, individual students and families can more fully consider what they want to gain from their postsecondary experience and what they hope to accomplish personally and professionally.

College and universities can use the PCO Framework to select the outcomes and measurements that best represent the mission and priorities of their campus and more clearly communicate that information to prospective students and their families. The more widespread collection and dissemination of post-collegiate outcome information allows students and their families to make more sophisticated judgments about where to invest their time and money.

The PCO Framework illuminates a broader array of postsecondary outcomes and a schema to more strongly link data on the programs and credentials of institutions to the impact of those degrees, including the accomplishments of their graduates.

We welcome you to email any comments, feedback and suggestions for improving the PCO Framework and Toolkit to Teri Lyn Hinds (thinds@aplu.org) and/or Kent Phillippe (kphilippe@aacc.nche.edu).