

# Exploring Pipeline Programs That Will Support Your Academic Journey

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Any academic journey is defined by multiple roles, diverse learning tasks, and the development of different skills. For minority students and faculty members, additional challenges, such as a lack of role models or language and sociocultural barriers, frequently stand in the way of navigating these journeys. Pipeline programs (also known as pathway programs) are designed to provide support and resources to aspiring, early-career, and established scholars from diverse ethnic, gender, and economic backgrounds.

In a recent [APS webinar](#), Rihana Mason, a research scientist at the Urban Child Study Center at Georgia State University, discussed how students can participate in pipeline programs and push for progress throughout their journeys. A veteran of academic pipeline programs herself, Mason has devoted part of her career to raising awareness of these programs. She is the cofounder of [Academic Pipeline Programs](#), a set of initiatives that supports students from underrepresented minorities with programming related to research, career, and life preparation. She is also coauthor (with Curtis Byrd) of [Academic Pipeline Programs: Diversifying Pathways From the Bachelor's to the Professoriate](#), an e-book describing best practices and offering guidance on starting and using such programs.

In the webinar, Mason discussed pipeline programs that support students from the precollegiate level to the graduate-school and faculty levels. “Funding is a survival need, but, at some point, just having the ability to pay for your education is not enough,” she said, noting that pipeline programs should also support inclusive practices and empowerment. Mason and Byrd created the THRIVE Index to help students and faculty evaluate pipeline programs, as well as other programs at their institutions, and push for changes and improvements.

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–Rihana Mason (Georgia State University)

They advise looking at these characteristics in a program:

- Departments and personnel involved
- Longevity and impact
- Research routines and responsibilities—what are participants asked to do, and for whom are the programs (e.g., women, women of color, veterans)?
- Identity support and inclusive practices
  
- How individuals are empowered
- Outcomes (e.g., graduation rates)

Mason also provided critical tips for effectively utilizing pathway programs:

- Understand your personal traits and needs.
- Identify your personal values and current goals.
- Calculate your financial needs.
- Explore your long-term goals.
- Specify your skill set.
- Recognize your preferred skills.
- Assess the skills that need development.

Mason also summarized how to get the most out of pipeline programs. “**Be inspired** by something,” she said, whether a personal relationship you develop in the program or something you notice is missing and feel called to create. “Explore **interdisciplinary** connections, learn from other methods, learn the language,” and then **be intentional** with your next steps. “Email other persons who have been involved, expand the network, and start talking to see how you can benefit” through collaboration. Finally, she added, seek **interconnectedness** in your interdisciplinary teams. Her own work, she noted, involves making connections with policy analysts and educators in classrooms, as well as those who provide education in their home.

“Knowing this entire ecosystem, I think, will also help you find how your psychological training is going to impact the world,” Mason concluded. “Through pipeline programs, you’ll see the diversity of how people have used their degrees—and that will be inspiring as well.”