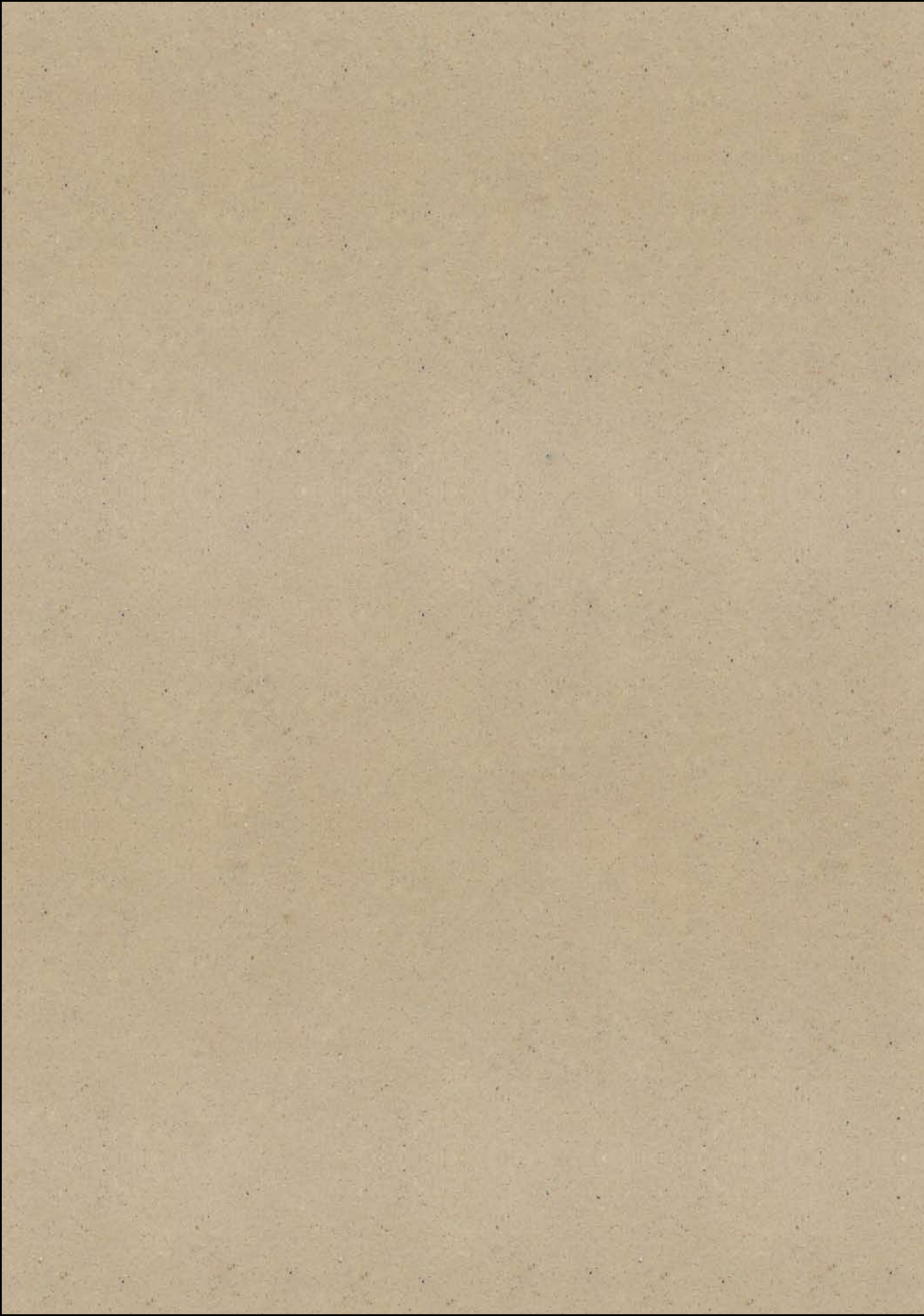


# Field Guide for Improving Student Success



Achieving  
the Dream™

Community Colleges Count



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- JBL Associates, Inc.
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# Achieving the Dream: Community Colleges Count

is a bold national effort to help more community college students succeed, with a special focus on students of color and low-income students. Our approach uses ground-level strategies to accomplish big-picture outcomes. Achieving the Dream proceeds from the premise that success begets success — and every incremental milestone for every student can be positively affected by community college leaders and educators. Each passing grade, each semester completed, each certificate and degree counts. Community colleges can help deliver on the promise of the American dream — in fact, no educational enterprise is better positioned to do so.

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Nine out of ten students in the United States say they hope to go to college. Fewer than half — roughly 39 percent of American adults — actually complete a two- or four-year degree. Students of color and low-income students, who have traditionally faced substantial barriers to success in college, are even less likely to complete degrees. Today, adults without degrees find themselves competing for a declining number of low-paying jobs and ineligible for a growing number of higher-paying ones. Community colleges — and particularly community colleges taking part in Achieving the Dream — can change that.

Achieving the Dream's student-centered model of institutional improvement is focused on creating a culture of evidence in which data and inquiry drive broad-based institutional efforts to close achievement gaps and improve student outcomes overall. This multi-faceted initiative seeks change at the institutional level as well as in state and national policy and through research and public engagement.

This guide provides an overview of Achieving the Dream’s institutional improvement framework for increasing student success. It includes examples of what Achieving the Dream institutions have done to transform themselves into more effective institutions. The guide is designed for college leaders who are considering having their colleges join Achieving the Dream, and thus making the necessary commitment to change college policies and practices in ways that enhance student success on a substantial scale.

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### **What is Achieving the Dream?**

**Section 1** gives an overview of Achieving the Dream — our goals and principles, and the five-step process we’ve developed for increasing student success through institutional improvement.

### **What distinguishes Achieving the Dream Colleges?**

**Section 2** presents the criteria for practice and performance that colleges must meet to be designated an Achieving the Dream Leader College. These criteria are based on the initiative’s experience of what characterizes an effective institution.

### **What steps will we take to increase student success?**

**Section 3** describes in detail the Achieving the Dream five-step process for improving student success. Implementation

recommendations developed and refined during Achieving the Dream’s demonstration phase are presented here, accompanied throughout the guide by selected case profiles and other resources.

### **Where do we begin?**

**Section 4** helps colleges get started. It presents a readiness assessment that colleges can use to determine how their current policies and practices measure up against the Achieving the Dream model of institutional improvement and decide if the initiative is a good fit given their goals and priorities. It also provides guidelines on what colleges should have in place before they begin the Achieving the Dream change process and offers tips on how to launch the initiative on their campuses.

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Achieving the Dream recognizes that no two institutions are alike; accordingly, the advice found in this guide draws on the experiences of a diverse group of colleges that have implemented the initiative’s institutional improvement process to increase student success.

# What is Achieving the Dream?

*Achieving the Dream: How we work.*



### Institutional Initiatives

Colleges participating in Achieving the Dream agree to engage faculty, staff, and administrators in a process of using data to identify gaps in student achievement and to implement and improve strategies for closing those gaps.

Achieving the Dream is especially interested in low-income students and students of color because research shows that they are most at risk of not achieving success. At the same time, by improving outcomes for these students, colleges will be able to increase success rates for students overall. Achieving the Dream institutions designated as Achieving the Dream Leader Colleges will be held to a higher standard, having shown consistent, measurable, and specific progress on at least one measure for three or more years. (See Leader College Performance Criteria, page 19, for more detailed information.)

### Policy Initiatives

Achieving the Dream aims to influence local, state, and national policy in support of efforts to increase community college student success. Participating states are working to change state-level priorities, rules, regulations, and resource allocations that can make it easier for community colleges to implement proven practices that improve student outcomes. Several states in which Achieving the Dream is now doing work have made the success of underprepared community college students an explicit public policy priority. Our goal is to have all states do the same.

The framework guiding Achieving the Dream state policy activity focuses on five high-leverage policy areas:

**Clear public policy commitment** to improving the success of underprepared students in community college;

**Data-driven performance measurement and accountability systems**, including development and use of robust common measures that enable benchmarking of state and institutional performance;

**Cross-system alignment** of expectations, standards, and assessments among K-12, community colleges and four-year institutions, as well as adult education and workforce systems;

**Incentives for improving services to academically underprepared students**, including policies to improve developmental education outcomes, and

**Financial aid policies and other individual and institutional incentives for persistence**, including performance funding.

The initiative's state policy work is accomplished through the efforts of state lead organizations and teams that develop policy priorities, undertake activities to advance priorities, and strengthen policy alliances. State efforts are supported by Achieving the Dream partners who organize convenings, generate policy research, inform key state and national audiences of progress, and support outreach to policymakers and other opinion leaders. The policy dimension of Achieving the Dream broadens the focus of the initiative beyond the campuses in order to help deepen and strengthen institutional improvement efforts.

Achieving the Dream is helping states to recognize the importance of the student success agenda, and incorporate it into a broader public policy framework.

#### About Achieving the Dream

Achieving the Dream began in 2004 with 27 community colleges in five states.

As of mid-2009, the initiative has grown to more than 100 institutions enrolling more than one million students in 21 states.

Co-designed by the Lumina Foundation for Education and seven national partner organizations, Achieving the Dream is the largest non-government initiative in community college history.

### Goals of the Initiative

Achieving the Dream seeks to help more students earn postsecondary credentials, including occupational certificates and degrees. Recognizing that community college students often take a long time to earn certificates or degrees, Achieving the Dream works with institutions to improve student progression through intermediate milestones, including the rates at which students:

- Successfully complete remedial or developmental instruction and advance to credit-bearing courses
- Enroll in and successfully complete the initial college-level or gatekeeper courses in subjects such as math and English
- Complete the courses they take with a grade of C or better
- Persist from one term to the next
- Earn a certificate or associate degree

### Principles of Institutional Improvement

Most efforts to improve community college student outcomes involve relatively small innovations or changes at the margins. Achieving the Dream is based on the premise that to improve student success on a substantial scale, colleges need to fundamentally change the way they operate. Colleges that effectively promote student success adhere to four principles:

**Committed leadership.** Senior college leaders actively support efforts to improve student success, not just to increase enrollments, and are committed to achieving equity in student outcomes across racial, ethnic, and income groups. Administrators, board members, and faculty and staff leaders demonstrate a willingness to make changes in policies, programs, and resource allocation to improve student success.

**Use of evidence to improve programs and services.** The college establishes processes for using data about student progression and outcomes to identify achievement gaps among student groups, formulates strategies for addressing the gaps identified and improving student success overall, and evaluates the effectiveness of those strategies.

**Broad engagement.** Faculty, student services staff, and administrators share responsibility for student success, and collaborate on assessing the effectiveness of programs and services and improving them. Other stakeholders with influence on student success (K–12 systems, community groups, employers, etc.) are included in discussions about student performance, desired outcomes, and potential improvement strategies. The college also gains invaluable insight about ways to improve student success from students themselves through surveys, focus groups, and/or advisory councils.

**Systemic institutional improvement.** The college establishes planning processes that rely on data to set goals for student success and then uses the data to measure goal attainment. The college regularly evaluates its academic programs and services to determine how well they promote student success and how they can be improved. Decisions about budget allocations are based on evidence of program effectiveness and are linked to plans to increase student success. Faculty and staff are afforded professional development opportunities that reinforce efforts that help to close achievement gaps and improve overall student success.

## Benefits of Involvement with Achieving the Dream

Community colleges that join Achieving the Dream and follow the institutional improvement process for student success can expect tangible benefits for their commitment and hard work.

**Evidence-driven institutional improvement.** The processes outlined in this guide can help colleges transform their cultures into ones that effectively use data and other evidence to make decisions and to evaluate effectiveness. Leaders become adept at using data to communicate with key internal and external stakeholders about the college's performance and to mobilize faculty, staff, and other stakeholders to collaborate on improving student outcomes.

**More effective use of resources.** Achieving the Dream enables colleges to invest limited resources in ways that pay off in improved student success.

**Accreditation and fulfillment of state performance standards.** As an evidence-driven initiative, Achieving the Dream provides a means of demonstrating to regional accrediting bodies that their expectations around student outcomes are being met. In addition, Achieving the Dream helps colleges meet state accountability standards.

**Expert coaching.** Achieving the Dream colleges receive expert help from a coach and a data facilitator. Coaches are typically former community college presidents or others with deep experience in institutional leadership and transformation. Data facilitators have working knowledge on using data and institutional research to identify areas of weakness and opportunities for improvement, and to guide changes in policy and practice that lead to better outcomes for students. Coaches and data facilitators are valuable resources and are often asked to help communicate with key constituents about the importance of student success and the relevance of student outcome data in planning change strategies.

**Learning community.** Achieving the Dream institutions participate in a national network of community colleges. This network meets annually to share effective practices and implementation strategies. Colleges also link up electronically and through in-person meetings. They benefit from connections with other institutions tackling similar challenges, through contacts they make on their own in the Achieving the Dream network and referrals from their coaches and data facilitators.

**Benchmarking with similar institutions.** Achieving the Dream colleges provide student cohort data to a central database and have access to the Achieving the Dream Web site, where they can compare their data on student progression and outcomes with data from peer colleges using innovative tools developed by the initiative.

**In-depth guidance.** The Achieving the Dream Web site contains a wealth of relevant research by Achieving the Dream partners, and how-to resources for use by colleges seeking to build a culture of evidence to improve student success.

### Five-Step Process for Increasing Student Success

Achieving the Dream helps colleges transform themselves according to the principles of institutional improvement through a five-step process (see Fig. 1):

**Step 1 Commit.** The college's senior leadership, with support from the board of trustees and faculty leaders, commits to making changes in policy and resource allocation necessary to improve student outcomes, communicates the vision widely within the institution, and organizes teams to oversee the process.

**Step 2 Use data to prioritize actions.** The college uses longitudinal student cohort data and other evidence to identify gaps in student achievement. A key premise of Achieving the Dream is that once faculty and staff see that students overall are not achieving at desired levels and that certain groups of students are not doing as well as others, they will be motivated to try new approaches to improve student success. To ensure that they use their resources to greatest effect, colleges are encouraged to prioritize the student achievement issues they plan to address.

**Step 3 Engage stakeholders.** The college engages faculty, staff, and other internal and external stakeholders in developing a limited set of focused strategies for remedying priority problems with student achievement, based on a diagnosis of the causes and an evaluation of the effectiveness of previous attempts by the institution and others to address similar problems.

**Step 4 Implement, evaluate, improve.**

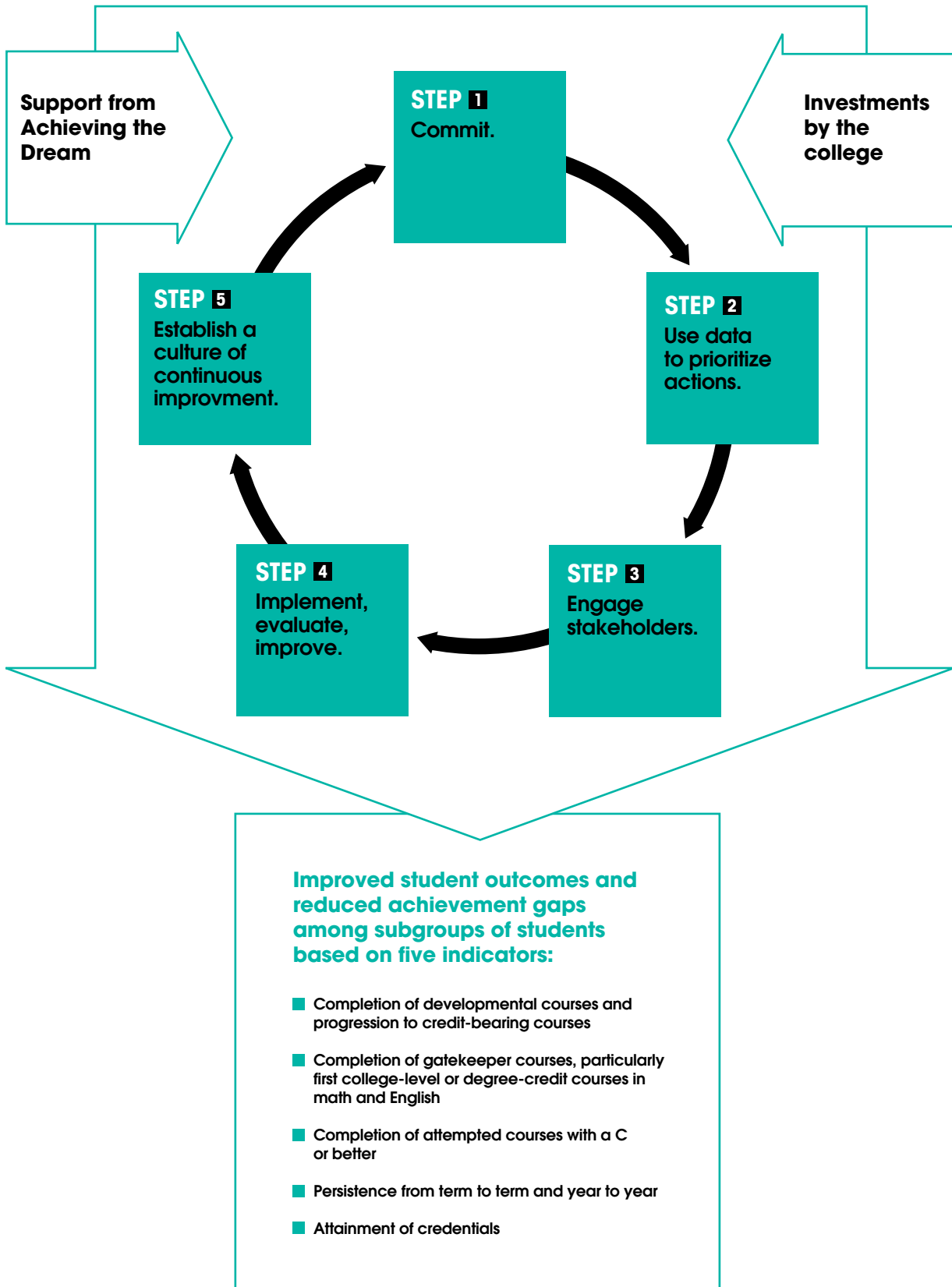
The college implements the strategies for increasing student success, making sure to evaluate the outcomes and using the results to make further improvements.

**Step 5 Establish a culture of continuous improvement.**

The college takes steps to institutionalize processes for improving the impact of programs and services on student outcomes. Attention is given to how resources are allocated, in order to bring new initiatives to scale and sustain proven strategies. Processes for program review, planning, and budgeting are driven by evidence of what works best for students.

By following these steps, Achieving the Dream colleges should be able to build effective and enduring evidence-based institutional practices that improve student success. (See Section 3, page 21, for more detailed information.)

**Figure 1 Achieving the Dream Five-Step Process for Increasing Student Success through Institutional Improvement**



### Breaking Down the Silos

SOUTH TEXAS COLLEGE, MCALLEN, TEXAS

Serving counties along the U.S.-Mexico border in southeastern Texas, South Texas College (STC) has a predominantly Hispanic student population. About 50 percent of students are considered low-income, nearly 40 percent are first-generation college students, and 71 percent receive financial aid.

STC joined Achieving the Dream in 2004 to learn how to better serve the educational needs of its students. At that point, STC made a strategic decision to institutionalize Achieving the Dream work into the college's existing processes. All Achieving the Dream initiatives are included in STC's strategic plan, and the college is using a template model — in which decisions are driven by data and analysis — for institutionalizing interventions.

Achieving the Dream provided STC with the framework to systematically and objectively review college policies and practices for their impact on student success. STC began to leverage qualitative research methods to gain a deeper understanding of the barriers that students were facing. This understanding led to several changes:

- STC reorganized its Office of Institutional Research and Effectiveness into three distinct operations focused on data management, research and analysis, and evaluation.
- STC established the Office of Student Learning Outcomes and Assessment and formed an administrative-level research, reporting, assessment, and planning team led by the director of research and analytical services.
- STC has invested heavily in faculty professional development with a focus on improving student success.

STC also sought to break down operational silos and improve communication and collaboration at the college. Now, college personnel routinely identify issues in need of attention and then propose interventions to address the problem identified. Each intervention is regularly assessed and has a “refine or abandon” point.

Through this collaborative, campus-wide effort, STC has learned many valuable lessons, including:

- The quantity and quality of questions will increase rapidly and in relationship to the implementation of Achieving the Dream principles.
- Automation of basic data reporting tasks is essential to keep up with demand.
- Data collection and tracking must become routine at every level.
- Rather than simply reporting data and expecting recipients to use it, researchers must bridge the gap by supplying interpretation and recommending strategies suggested by the data.
- Capacity must be built throughout the organization for effective assessment, evaluation, and use of data for decision-making.
- A culture of excellence based on evidence requires institutional systems and processes, as well as projects and interventions.
- Changes in organizational structure and processes must be evaluated.



# What distinguishes Achieving the Dream Colleges?

Every college invited to join Achieving the Dream is entitled to receive coaching, data facilitation, and other support to help implement the Achieving the Dream evidence-driven process for increasing student success. Achieving the Dream Leader Colleges are institutions that have implemented this institutional improvement process and met high standards of practice and performance.



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# Criteria for Practice

The following set of practices reflects the four core principles of Achieving the Dream’s evidence-driven model for increasing student success through institutional improvement.

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## Achieving the Dream Principles and Practices for Increasing Student Success through Institutional Improvement

### PRINCIPLE 1 Committed Leadership

#### 1.1 Vision and values

- a. President/chancellor and leadership team actively support efforts to improve student learning and completion, not just increase enrollments.
- b. President/chancellor and other senior leaders make an explicit policy commitment to improve performance for all students and achieve equity in student outcomes across racial/ethnic and income groups. This policy is communicated to faculty, staff, students, and the community.
- c. Institutional communications, including news releases, the college’s Web site, appropriate print publications, etc., address the student success agenda.

#### 1.2 Commitment

- a. College’s board expects, and the president/chancellor provides, regular reports on student outcomes and the impact of institutional efforts to improve success rates across all student groups.
- b. Senior leaders demonstrate willingness to support changes in policies, procedures, and resource allocation to improve student success.
- c. Faculty leaders actively support a culture of inquiry and evidence and a broad-based student success agenda.

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## **PRINCIPLE 2 Use of Evidence to Improve Policies, Programs, and Services**

### **2.1 Information Technology (IT) and Institutional Research (IR) capacity**

- a. IT capacity is adequate to meet the demand for data and institutional research.
- b. Policies and procedures are in place to ensure the integrity of the data collected.
- c. IR staff capacity is adequate to meet demand for data analysis and research.
- d. IR staff effectively educates and assists college personnel to use data and research to improve programs and services.

### **2.2 Process for identifying achievement gaps**

- a. College routinely collects, analyzes, and reports longitudinal data on cohorts of students to track student progression and outcomes.
- b. College routinely disaggregates student cohort data by age, race, gender, income, and other factors to identify gaps in achievement among student groups.
- c. College regularly conducts surveys and focus groups with students, faculty, and staff to identify strengths and weaknesses in programs and services, as well as opportunities for improvement.

### **2.3 Process for formulating and evaluating solutions**

- a. College routinely engages faculty, staff, and others across the campus community to review data on student achievement and help develop and refine strategies for addressing priority problems.
- b. College routinely evaluates the effectiveness of efforts to improve student success and uses the results to improve policy and practice.

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## PRINCIPLE 3 Broad Engagement

### 3.1 Faculty and staff

- a. Faculty meets regularly to examine course and program outcomes and develop strategies for addressing achievement gaps and improving student success.
- b. Faculty routinely assesses academic programs and teaching strategies from the perspective of current research on effective practice.
- c. Part-time or adjunct faculty is actively engaged in institutional efforts to improve student success.
- d. Student services staff routinely assesses student success strategies from the perspective of current research on effective practice.
- e. There is alignment and extensive collaboration on efforts to improve student success between academic/instructional units and student services.

### 3.2 Students and external stakeholders

- a. College secures active student participation in efforts to improve student outcomes.
- b. College secures input from external stakeholders to identify causes of achievement gaps and inform the development of strategies for improving student success.

#### ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS

While Achieving the Dream does not expect colleges to follow every practice listed, we believe that effective colleges operate in ways that manifest all four principles. The experiences of Achieving the Dream institutions suggest that certain practices are essential to improving the impact of programs and services on student success. These include:

- Active support from the president/chancellor and leadership team for efforts to improve student outcomes, not just enrollments (Practice 1.1 A)
- Commitment by top leadership to achieve equity in outcomes across racial/ethnic and income groups (Practice 1.1 B)
- Collection and reporting of data to track progression and outcomes of student cohorts over time (Practice 2.2 A)
- Engagement of faculty in evaluating program outcomes and developing strategies to close achievement gaps (Practice 3.1 A)

Institutions seeking to become Achieving the Dream Leader Colleges will be expected to exhibit these practices.

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## PRINCIPLE 4 Systemic Institutional Improvement

### 4.1 Institutional management

- a. College has established a strategic planning process that relies on data to set goals for student success and to measure goal attainment.
- b. Plans for a given year are driven by a limited set of strategic priorities that have a focus on student success.
- c. College regularly evaluates its academic programs and student services to determine how well they promote student success and how they can be improved.
- d. Decisions about budget allocations are based on evidence of program effectiveness and linked to plans to increase student success rates.
- e. College uses external grant funds strategically to support systemic efforts to improve outcomes for students broadly, not just for isolated projects that benefit small numbers of students.
- f. College actively works to enlarge and sustain pilot programs or practices that prove effective.
- g. Student success agenda is integrated with ongoing accreditation activity, reviews, and self-study.

### 4.2 Organization

- a. College has a standing committee or committees responsible for guiding and monitoring efforts to improve student outcomes.
- b. Major meetings, organizational units, and work groups regularly focus on the student success agenda.

### 4.3 Professional development

- a. College offers faculty and staff professional development that reinforces efforts to improve student success and close achievement gaps.
- b. College's induction and orientation activities for new faculty and staff, including adjunct and contingent faculty, foster a commitment to student success.
- c. College provides training to faculty and staff on using data and research to improve programs and services.

Section 4 contains a tool for colleges considering joining Achieving the Dream to rate themselves on these criteria.

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# Leader College Performance Criteria

Institutions seeking Achieving the Dream Leader College status are held to a higher standard on the criteria for practice. Additionally, to be designated an Achieving the Dream Leader College, institutions must present evidence of increases in student achievement on at least one measure over three or more years. The documentation of increases in student achievement should be in an area where the college has sought to improve overall student success or close gaps in achievement among student groups.

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Institutions seeking Leader College status may present data on increases in the rate of student performance and reducing achievement gaps among student groups for any one of these key measures of Achieving the Dream:

- Course completion
- Advancement from remedial or developmental to credit-bearing courses
- Completion of college-level gatekeeper math and English courses
- Term-to-term and year-to-year retention
- Completion of certificates or degrees

Alternatively, colleges may provide data on other measures relevant to the specific student success interventions they have undertaken.

Whatever the measure, colleges are encouraged to present data on increases in the rates of student success, not just the absolute numbers of students succeeding, since the latter can be affected by changes in enrollment rather than in individual student performance.

Colleges should be able to describe at least one intervention they have implemented to achieve the documented improvement in student outcomes. The interventions described should be of a sufficient scale to benefit a substantial proportion of the target population.

## Early Interventions Reduce Developmental Education Enrollments

EL PASO COMMUNITY COLLEGE, EL PASO, TEXAS

Of the nearly 10,000 first-time college students who took college placement tests at El Paso Community College (EPCC) in 2003–04, 98 percent needed at least one developmental course and 38 percent needed developmental courses in three subjects — math, reading, and writing. In other words, nearly all students were beginning college with a sense that they were at a disadvantage.

EPCC research showed a surprising reason high school students were not placing into college-level courses: a lack of understanding of the importance of, and reasons for, placement exams. Students were not prepared to demonstrate the full extent of their preparation.

Upon joining the Achieving the Dream effort, EPCC launched the College Readiness Initiative to ensure more high school graduates would place into the coursework for which they were truly prepared. This step furthered local collaborative efforts already underway. EPCC is now working with local school districts and the University of Texas at El Paso (UTEP) to realign K–16 curricula and share effective instructional practice and student performance data. Students take placement tests in high school and receive interventions before they graduate. Students and parents are also offered a comprehensive orientation that explains why placement tests are required and what the scores mean.

The effort has had measurable and sustained results. EPCC has seen:

- An increase in the number of students placing directly into college-level certificate and degree-applicable courses
- A reduction in the number of students requiring developmental education coursework upon entering college, with a 24 percent decrease in developmental reading enrollments and a 37 percent decrease in developmental writing enrollments between spring 2006 and spring 2008

In addition, because of Achieving the Dream’s emphasis on evidence-driven decision-making, EPCC and UTEP have created a data-sharing system that uses a single student identifier, allowing longitudinal tracking of students from local high schools through either or both institutions. Outcomes are shared with faculty, counselors, administrators, and others from all institutions involved. This tracking has enabled EPCC to confer associate degrees, even after students have transferred to UTEP, when the required hours are completed. In the past, students often had enough hours to earn a degree, but never actually received a diploma. Now, they are sent a letter of congratulations from EPCC and an invitation to attend commencement.

**FIGURE 2**  
**Three-year Comparison of English Placement by Cohort and Level at El Paso Community College**

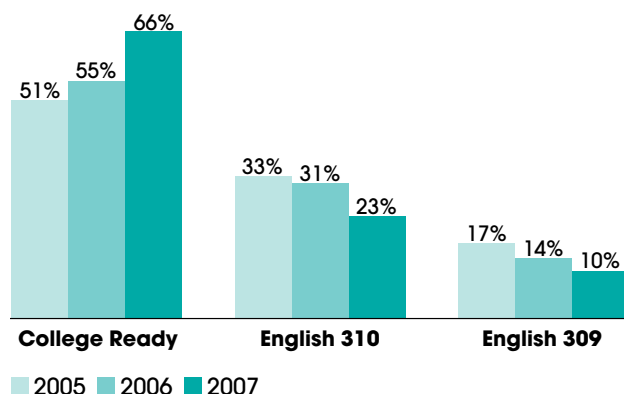


Figure 2 shows that the percentage of students placing into college-level English has increased while the percentages of students placing into one level (English 310) and two levels (English 309) below college-level have decreased. Similar results were seen in both reading and math.

# What steps will we take?

This section describes Achieving the Dream's five-step process for increasing student success.

- Step 1** Commit to improving student outcomes.
- Step 2** Use data to prioritize actions.
- Step 3** Engage stakeholders to help develop a plan.
- Step 4** Implement, evaluate, and improve strategies.
- Step 5** Establish a culture of continuous improvement.



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## Step 1 Commit.

The first step in the Achieving the Dream improvement process is for the college's leadership to make a clear commitment to improving student outcomes. College leaders are expected to make the improvement of student outcomes an institutional priority, and to communicate that priority to internal and external stakeholders. Leadership support for the initiative sends a signal to faculty, staff, and others that Achieving the Dream is more than just another project.

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### WHAT WORKS

#### Get the board on board.

Getting buy-in from the college's board of trustees is critical to ensuring that improving student outcomes becomes and remains a top priority. Increasingly, boards of trustees expect to see data on the college's performance. Sharing analyses of student outcomes is an effective way to secure board members' support for a student success agenda and engage them in the improvement process.

#### Engage faculty leadership.

One of the key challenges facing many Achieving the Dream institutions has been engaging faculty on a wide scale in the process of increasing student success. Institutions that have involved faculty leaders in the planning process early on have generally been more successful at engaging the broader faculty.

#### Communicate the vision broadly.

Achieving the Dream institution leaders have used a variety of methods to communicate with the college community about the initiative, including fall convocations and other major forums, faculty and staff professional development events, and data briefs. Inviting coaches or data facilitators to make presentations about the initiative's goals and approaches is another strategy to help communicate about Achieving the Dream.

#### Put your money where your mouth is.

Leadership commitment to the Achieving the Dream improvement process involves a willingness to support changes in college policies and procedures and to make the resource investments needed to improve student success, even in the face of competing interests and potential resistance from college stakeholders.

#### Build a core team and a data team to oversee the process.

Achieving the Dream expects college leaders to organize teams of personnel to oversee the improvement process. The core team's function is to lead the institutional change work, while the data team is expected to collect and analyze data to support the work of the core team. Some colleges find that it works better to combine these two functions into a single team. Ultimately, the goal is to build these functions into the college's established structures for managing academic programs and student services.

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## Step 2 Use Data to Prioritize Actions.

Once the college has made a commitment to improving student outcomes, the next step is to make an honest and forthright assessment of performance with respect to student outcomes, identify barriers to student achievement and opportunities for improvement, and explicitly articulate those that will be addressed as priorities.

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### WHAT WORKS

#### Track the progress and outcomes of student cohorts.

Achieving the Dream colleges are expected to conduct longitudinal analysis of student progression and outcomes on a regular basis. This is accomplished by tracking entering cohorts of students each semester and documenting their success in meeting key milestones on the way to acquiring a degree — for instance, completing developmental courses, passing college-level math and English, and persisting from term to term and year to year. Such longitudinal tracking enables colleges to identify leakage points where students tend to struggle and drop out. To help colleges conduct these analyses, the initiative requires colleges to submit student-level cohort data on an annual basis.

#### Disaggregate data to identify achievement gaps.

Achieving the Dream encourages colleges to disaggregate the results of longitudinal cohort tracking and other analyses by student characteristics such as race and ethnicity, gender, and income, to determine if there are gaps in achievement among different student groups.

#### Use data from a variety of sources to better understand barriers to success.

Achieving the Dream colleges use data from a variety of sources for this purpose, including student and faculty focus groups and surveys such as the Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE).

#### Communicate the results broadly.

Achieving the Dream institutions have found that seeing that overall student achievement is below desired levels, and that certain groups of students are not doing as well as others, motivates faculty and staff to work to break down barriers to student success. Some institutions have done this by presenting key findings in concise, easy-to-read data briefs that are disseminated widely and used to generate discussion among faculty and staff on the causes of the achievement problems identified.

#### Prioritize problems for action.

Because resources are limited, colleges are advised to prioritize the problems to address first. Priorities can be set by assessing the feasibility of arriving at effective solutions, or anticipating the likely impact of solving a given problem. However problems are prioritized, the process offers an opportunity to involve faculty and staff in courageous conversations about how students are faring, and to begin discussions on what changes should be made to improve student outcomes.

## Tools for Identifying Gaps in Student Achievement

The following tool was developed by Achieving the Dream to help colleges decide what data to collect for identifying student achievement gaps. The core team and the data team should work together to complete this chart.

### Data for Identifying Student Achievement Gaps

Are students successfully completing developmental education?			
Data needed	Data management staff	Data analysis staff	Data audiences
Data availability and location	Data collection schedule	Data reporting staff	

Are students successfully completing identified gatekeeper courses (grade C or better)?			
Data needed	Data management staff	Data analysis staff	Data audiences
Data availability and location	Data collection schedule	Data reporting staff	

What is the rate of successful course completion for all courses (grade C or better)?			
Data needed	Data management staff	Data analysis staff	Data audiences
Data availability and location	Data collection schedule	Data reporting staff	

Are student persisting from one term to the next?			
Data needed	Data management staff	Data analysis staff	Data audiences
Data availability and location	Data collection schedule	Data reporting staff	

How many and what percent of students are completing a certificate and/or associate degree?			
Data needed	Data management staff	Data analysis staff	Data audiences
Data availability and location	Data collection schedule	Data reporting staff	

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## Step 3 Engage Stakeholders.

The third step in the Achieving the Dream process for increasing student success is to engage internal and external stakeholders in the development of strategies for addressing priority problems and improving student achievement.

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### WHAT WORKS

#### **Involve faculty and student services staff.**

It is essential that faculty members, academic support and student services staff, department chairs, and program administrators be empowered to devise strategies to close achievement gaps. These are the professionals best positioned to know what will work with students. Tapping into the know-how of those who work closely with students can help uncover obstacles to student success and generate practical solutions to overcoming those obstacles. When done effectively, involving these stakeholders in the process can ensure shared ownership of the student success agenda and momentum in the face of presidential transitions and other challenges.

#### **Ask students what they think.**

Achieving the Dream colleges gain invaluable insight into the causes of problems with student achievement by getting input from students themselves through surveys, focus groups, advisory councils, stakeholder dialogues, campus conversations, and other means. Some institutions have chosen to include students on their Achieving the Dream core team and have found their involvement beneficial.

#### **Engage outside stakeholders, and go beyond the usual suspects.**

Some factors that influence student outcomes are rooted in communities from which students come, and are therefore beyond the control of a community college. Community members and community-based organizations are rich sources of information about these factors and are potential partners in addressing barriers to student success. A number of Achieving the Dream institutions have sought to involve K–12 schools, community groups, the business community, families of students and prospective students, and other outside stakeholders in the process of identifying ways to close student achievement gaps. Community involvement allows colleges to develop more systemic solutions to problems of student underachievement, while building support from external stakeholders for a student success agenda.

#### **Diagnose achievement gaps before formulating strategies.**

While it may be tempting to move directly to solutions, it is important that colleges understand the root causes of student underachievement so that the interventions will be effective in remedying the problem. The most successful Achieving the Dream institutions examine data carefully and objectively before determining what strategies best address the issues. Engaging those closest to the problem, such as faculty, students, and the community, in diagnosing achievement gaps is essential to this process.

### Review the research literature.

Achieving the Dream is conducting research on effective approaches to improving success for underprepared students. The Achieving the Dream Web site contains links to relevant research, and also provides a searchable database with descriptions and evaluation data on student success interventions that Achieving the Dream institutions have implemented. Achieving the Dream has created an online Equity Resource Center (ERC) with information for institutions seeking ways to understand and address the effects of inequity on student success.

### Examine previous efforts to address achievement gaps.

Understanding what others have done is important, but so is examining efforts by your own college to address the problem. What was done? Was there any effort to evaluate the results? Were the strategies sustained? What could be done to enhance or expand strategies that are supported by evidence?

### Review the effects of policies and procedures.

Achieving the Dream institutions have found it useful to review their academic policies and consider how they affect student outcomes and what changes might be made to make it easier for students to succeed. In doing this,

colleges should consider how policies affect different groups of students and how changes can help address achievement gaps among students by race and ethnicity, gender, income, or other factors. This is an additional area where engaging students in the conversation will likely yield critical, firsthand information

### Formulate strategies.

Achieving the Dream institutions have used a number of methods for formulating strategies to address student achievement gaps. Some have expanded or improved upon existing interventions. Others have tried new strategies, often adopting strategies based on national research about effective practices. Many attend the annual Achieving the Dream Strategy Institute to learn from the successes and challenges faced by other Achieving the Dream institutions.

Faculty members, staff members, and administrators convened for this purpose should be encouraged to develop *systemic* reforms that will improve student performance across the college as opposed to narrowly focused programs or services that may benefit only small numbers of students.

#### SYSTEMIC REFORM EXAMPLES

- Improving the experience for first-year students through closer advising, orientation programs, student success courses, and other approaches
- Aligning developmental course learning outcomes with the requirements of success in college-level coursework
- Integrating orientation to college and college success skills into developmental instruction
- Redesigning curricula and pedagogy in developmental and gatekeeper courses to increase student success
- Providing tutoring and supplemental instruction for students in courses with high failure rates
- Convening college math faculty to work with teachers from feeder high schools to align curricula and standards so that students who complete required mathematics sequences in high school will be prepared for college-level math without the need for remediation

# Community Conversations Spur Student Success Initiatives

UNIVERSITY OF NEW MEXICO AT GALLUP, NEW MEXICO

The University of New Mexico–Gallup (UNM–Gallup) has the largest Native American student population of any public two-year college in the United States. It is located in the poorest county in New Mexico (and one of the poorest in the nation) and its large Native American population has been subject to significant historical trauma that has resulted in a legacy of distrust of educational institutions.

Upon joining Achieving the Dream, UNM–Gallup set out to build community involvement. In thinking about all those whose support could help students succeed, UNM–Gallup committed to widening the circle beyond the usual suspects. Engaging in community conversations was a key strategy. With assistance from Achieving the Dream, UNM–Gallup established a college and community leadership team composed of members from the Zuni Adult Basic Education Center, the New Mexico Department of Health, the Navajo Nation Program for Self Reliance, the Coalition for Healthy and Resilient Youth, school board members, and the New Mexico Workforce Connection, Northern Area, among others.

This broadly inclusive team then:

- Analyzed the community’s assets and barriers with respect to student success
- Assessed the strengths and weaknesses of the college-community relationship
- Constructed a historical timeline illustrating the trends in educational access and equity in the region. This timeline has become a community asset that has been widely disseminated to generate awareness and discussion.
- Organized a broad-based community conversation (called a “Talking Circle”) to engage even more community members in a moderated discussion of how to help students achieve their goals, and to agree upon solutions and strategies. The college saw this as an opportunity to reach out to the Navajo and Zuni communities in a substantive way. For some of the more than 150 participants, the event was their first time on campus, and that alone was an important step toward building a stronger relationship between the college and the community.

Several tangible benefits have resulted, including the following:

- A permanent student success campus committee has been formed with members of the college and external community.
- The college held a Campus Conversation to engage faculty and staff in a dialogue about student success and reestablished the K–20 Task Force, which will identify further strategies focused on college readiness.
- The Student Senate is co-sponsoring events and focusing their activities on building student success.



## TIPS ON ENGAGING STAKEHOLDERS

Effective stakeholder engagement, whether with faculty, staff, students, or the outside community, can help a college successfully implement its Achieving the Dream agenda. Based on experience working with institutions on engaging campus and community stakeholders, we offer the following tips.

- 1 Begin by listening.** Either formally through interviews and focus groups, or informally, it is useful to spend some time listening to stakeholders. What are stakeholders' priorities and how do your proposed topics line up with their interests? What language do they use to discuss the things you are interested in, and what are their starting-point positions? This kind of information and insight will inevitably help you engage people more effectively.
- 2 Respect people's time and energy.** Try to make the sessions you organize convenient for those who will be attending. Provide drinks and snacks. Have all the needed tools, such as flip charts, markers, tape recorders, etc., ready and organized. Be organized so that things start and end on time. Finally, take time to make sure people understand why you've asked them to participate, what your goals are, and how the results of the deliberations will be used.
- 3 Frame issues in ways that promote creative problem-solving.** This means you should:
  - Avoid jargon; use language that everyone can relate to and appreciate.
  - When possible, connect the issue you wish to address with people's pre-existing values and concerns.
  - Provide data judiciously. Data can be extremely relevant to the kind of problem-solving discussion you want to have, but don't overdo it if you are engaging non-experts.
  - For non-experts, focus on values and broad strategies more than technical details and policy specifics.
- 4 Reach beyond the usual suspects.** Including groups and individuals who may have important contributions to make, but are rarely heard from, is a challenging proposition, yet one that has great payoff. A personal invitation goes a long way and will get far better results than an e-mail blast or fliers. Consider offering incentives for participation, especially for students. A gift card to the bookstore is a recommended incentive.
- 5 Find multiple ways to engage stakeholders.** A strong engagement effort will give stakeholders multiple and varied opportunities to learn about, talk about, think about, and act on the problems at hand. Consider focus groups, small group dialogues, campus or community conversations, and online strategies such as Listservs and blogs.
- 6 Make sure to close the loop.** Always respond to the efforts of the stakeholders you've chosen to engage. This is partly a matter of taking care to promptly follow up on any given round of engagement. For instance, participants in college-sponsored discussions should be informed of the ways their ideas and concerns are being incorporated into the college's planned activities. Importantly, it also means taking the time to explain why some ideas are not being pursued. Doing so deepens stakeholders' understanding of the issues and fosters mutual respect.

A format that helps people wrestle with different perspectives and the pros and cons of going down alternative paths is often a very useful tool for helping people avoid wishful thinking and encouraging them to talk about practical solutions.

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## Step 4 Implement, Evaluate, Improve.

Achieving the Dream institutions have found it most effective to focus their energies on implementing a limited number of strategies (usually two to four). At many institutions, the core team initially oversees the implementation of strategies. As time goes on, a standing committee or another established body responsible for monitoring student success at the college should take on this role.

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### WHAT WORKS

#### Develop and launch an implementation plan.

Achieving the Dream institutions have found it useful to develop an implementation plan. Successful implementation plans:

- Specify the goals of the intervention
- Include a theory of change with a logic model that describes how the intervention will help to achieve the desired goals
- Assign tasks with clear timelines
- Specify how interventions will be evaluated
- Describe how the intervention, if successful, will be brought to scale and sustained

An intervention plan has a better chance of succeeding if it is developed in consultation with the faculty and staff members who will be involved in its implementation.

#### Evaluate strategies.

Once strategies have been implemented, colleges need to collect data to evaluate their effectiveness. In addition to the data submitted to the Achieving the Dream database, the college should identify additional qualitative and quantitative data that will help determine what effect the strategy has on student achievement.

#### Enhance and expand strategies.

Colleges should use the results of any evaluation of a strategy to improve its effectiveness. To the extent that a strategy proves effective, the college needs to identify necessary changes in budget and policy to scale it up and sustain it.

# Cooperative Learning Leads to Increased Retention and Persistence

PATRICK HENRY COLLEGE, MARTINSVILLE, VIRGINIA

With 3,300 students, Patrick Henry Community College (PHCC) serves rural residents in south-central Virginia. The region has experienced tough economic challenges and high unemployment rates. One third of the college's first-time degree-seeking students are minorities, with 80 percent placing into developmental courses.

From the beginning, key institutional leaders were enthusiastic about participating in Achieving the Dream, and their enthusiasm rapidly spread.

The analysis of the data collected by PHCC indicated that failing a developmental math course significantly diminished the likelihood of a student completing a certificate or degree. PHCC had also learned that slight increases in grade point averages improved the likelihood that students would complete their educational goals. PHCC decided its priority focus would be on the first-year experience. A research and planning phase featuring a high level of faculty involvement led PHCC to adopt cooperative learning strategies.

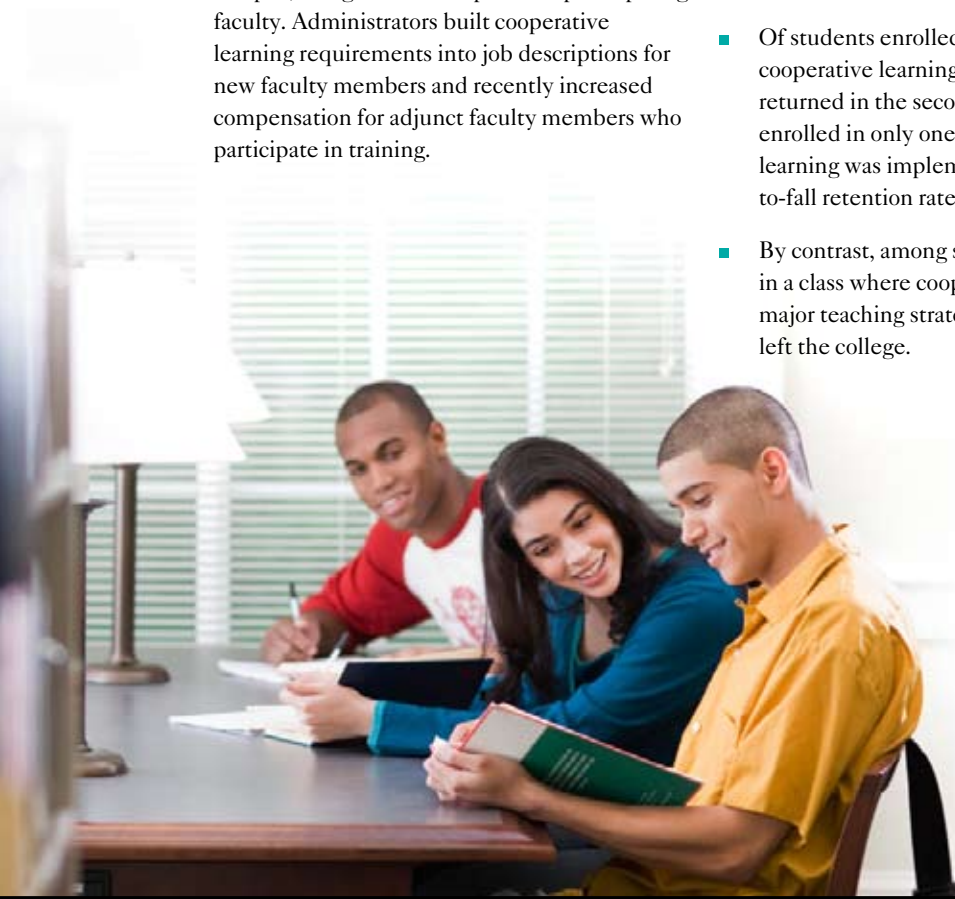
PHCC offered faculty training on and off campus, and gave small stipends to participating faculty. Administrators built cooperative learning requirements into job descriptions for new faculty members and recently increased compensation for adjunct faculty members who participate in training.

The cooperative learning program adopted by PHCC is focused on two main elements: positive interdependence (in which each student is dependent on other students) and individual accountability (in which each student pulls his/her own weight within a group). These two elements were introduced via three main strategies:

- Base groups (comprised of 3–4 students grouped heterogeneously), which typically last the entire semester and are a source of mutual support
- Informal ad hoc groups of 2–4 students lasting anywhere from a few minutes to one class period
- Formal cooperative learning groups, which include 3–4 students working on a major project, presentation, or paper

The work has yielded results. PHCC found that the more classes students took where cooperative learning was used, the more likely they were to persist.

- PHCC reduced single-term dropout rates and increased the percentage of students enrolling in subsequent terms.
- Of students enrolled in two or more cooperative learning classes, 95 percent returned in the second year. Students enrolled in only one class where cooperative learning was implemented showed a spring-to-fall retention rate of 80 percent.
- By contrast, among students not enrolled in a class where cooperative learning was a major teaching strategy, nearly 25 percent left the college.



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## Step 5 Establish a Culture of Continuous Improvement.

As strategies prove successful and are brought to scale, colleges are expected to repeat the initial steps of this process, identifying new problem areas and developing, testing, and expanding effective approaches to addressing those problems.

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### WHAT WORKS

#### **Organize for student success.**

To the extent necessary, colleges should ensure that committee structures foster engagement by faculty, student services staff, and administrators in using evidence to improve student outcomes.

#### **Infuse evidence-driven decision-making into strategic planning, program review, and budgeting.**

The college's processes for strategic planning, program review, and budgeting should drive improvements in programs and services. Evidence of student outcomes should guide the college as it sets strategic goals and objectives and measures progress. Regular evaluation of academic programs and student support services should determine how effective they are at fostering student success and inform efforts to improve them. Resources should be allocated based on evidence of what works to improve student success.

#### **Offer professional development to further the student success agenda.**

Colleges should ensure that the professional development opportunities available to faculty and staff are designed strategically to advance efforts to improve student outcomes. Some Achieving the Dream institutions have found that providing professional development for adjunct faculty members is one way to engage them in the improvement process.

# Where do we begin?

This section provides a readiness assessment for colleges to use in considering whether to join Achieving the Dream and embark on the initiative's evidence-driven process for increasing student success through institutional improvement.



Use this tool to assess the extent to which your college has implemented practices that reflect the initiative's principles of institutional improvement. The assessment is designed to help colleges decide whether Achieving the Dream is a good fit, given existing and desired goals and priorities. If we decide to work together in Achieving the Dream, we will also use this assessment to guide initial planning for the work. The following includes guidelines about what new Achieving the Dream colleges should have in place before starting the change process and how to launch the initiative on campus.

### Readiness Assessment

The readiness assessment tool, which begins on page 37, is organized around the four principles of the Achieving the Dream model for increasing student success through institutional improvement. A five-point scale is provided to enable colleges to indicate the extent to which they have implemented practices that show progress toward successful realization of the principles.

Colleges are not expected to have implemented all of the practices listed under the principles. In fact, the Achieving the Dream improvement process is designed precisely to help Achieving the Dream colleges adopt practices like those enumerated in the readiness assessment.

To complete the assessment, colleges should form a team of senior administrators, faculty, and staff leaders. The team should meet and discuss the assessment. More important than coming to a precise rating on each item is for college leaders to discuss whether existing policies and practices support student success, and what changes are needed to improve student outcomes.

Space is provided for the team to summarize the college's strengths and weaknesses under each principle and, at the end, to indicate what the team sees as the main opportunities and challenges in pursuing a student success agenda at the college. This information will be useful in working with Achieving the Dream coaches and data facilitators and in developing a plan for strengthening evidence-based student success efforts on the institution's campus.

### Readiness Guidelines

Based on the experiences of institutions that have been successful in transforming themselves according to the Achieving the Dream model, colleges considering initiating the improvement process should have the following in place:

**Commitment.** College leaders must be committed to making the changes in policy and practice and willing to invest the resources necessary to improve learning and completion for all students, while achieving equity in student outcomes across racial and income groups.

**Broad-based buy-in.** Board members, faculty leaders, and senior staff members should be well informed about Achieving the Dream goals and approaches and indicate a willingness to actively support and participate in the process.

**IT and IR capacity.** Colleges will need sufficient capacity in information technology and institutional research to track the progress of cohorts of students over time and conduct other research necessary to identify gaps in student achievement, formulate strategies for closing the gaps, and evaluate the success of those strategies in ways that are useful to decision-makers.

**Strategic planning mechanism.** Ideally, colleges will have in place a strategic planning process that can be used to set and measure achievement toward institutional goals.

**Aspiration.** Prospective Achieving the Dream colleges should aspire to meet the standards of practice and performance required to become Achieving the Dream Leader Colleges. (See Section 2.)

Achieving the Dream has found that leadership is critical to success. Colleges that have begun the Achieving the Dream process but experience turnover in top leadership should revisit the guidelines when new leaders arrive to ensure that they are prepared to continue making progress in building an effective Achieving the Dream institution.

### Tips on Launching Achieving the Dream on Your Campus

The launch sets a tone and rhythm that either supports or detracts from efforts to adopt a new institutional model to improve student success at your college. The experiences of Achieving the Dream institutions suggest that taking the following steps early in the process will enhance the chances for long-term success.

#### **Broadly involve key internal stakeholders in the initial discussions about participation in Achieving the Dream.**

Achieving the Dream will more likely be embraced as an institutional priority if there is broad consultation and support during the decision-making stages, rather than having the initiative thrust on the college from above. The same degree of transparency and collaboration that the college wishes to model in moving the initiative forward should be followed in making the decision to participate.

**Make key leaders and constituents aware of Achieving the Dream.** Colleges can engage key stakeholders about Achieving the Dream through presentations at meetings that bring together faculty members, student services staff, administrators, and community members. This also can be accomplished by hosting a large meeting to which all college personnel are invited. In communicating about Achieving the Dream, it is important to help stakeholders understand that the initiative is more of a journey, not a destination. Successful colleges also develop an early understanding of the continuous improvement process, in which student success interventions are constantly evaluated, improved, and shared.

#### **Select the core team and the data team.**

The role of these key teams was discussed in Section 3, page 23. The persons appointed to the core and data teams should be well respected by the college community. Selection of the core team leader is especially important. This person should be placed high enough in the organization — vice presidents of academic or student affairs often play this role — to signal that the initiative is a priority for the college and ensure broad-based buy-in and support for it. Many colleges also appoint a coordinator to assist the core team leader in managing the day-to-day activities.

**Determine baseline performance.** There will be many opportunities to examine data, but to engage stakeholders most effectively colleges should collect and analyze data on the five Achieving the Dream performance measures for a period of time leading up to joining the initiative. This assessment will serve as a baseline against which future changes in performance can be measured and provide meaningful context to discussions about goals for improving student success.

#### **Examine promising practices developed by Achieving the Dream institutions.**

Research conducted by Achieving the Dream shows that basic-skills students who co-enroll in a college success class do better than students who do not take a success course. Further, students who complete at least 12 uninterrupted credit hours also have significantly higher success rates. While these strategies do not guarantee greater success for students, the research suggests that colleges can use these and other research-based approaches to improve student outcomes.



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# College Readiness Assessment

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Institution Name

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Date

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Team Members Completing the Assessment

Use the scale provided to indicate the extent to which your institution currently has implemented the practices listed under each principle of the Achieving the Dream evidence-driven model for increasing student success through institutional improvement. To repeat, colleges joining Achieving the Dream are not expected to have implemented all of the practices listed under the principles. The Achieving the Dream five-step process for improving student outcomes is designed to help institutions adopt and strengthen practices that reflect the principles of the model.

## Principles and Practices for Increasing Student Success through Institutional Improvement.

### PRINCIPLE 1 Committed Leadership

		Extent of implementation				
		little/none	increasing	a lot		
<b>1.1</b>	<b>Vision and values</b>					
<b>1.1 a</b>	President/chancellor and leadership team actively support efforts to improve student learning and completion, not just increase enrollments.	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>1.1 b</b>	President/chancellor and other senior leaders have made an explicit policy commitment, communicated to faculty, staff, students, and the community, to improve performance for all students and achieve equity in student outcomes across racial/ethnic and income groups.	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>1.1 c</b>	Institutional communications, including Web site and news releases, emphasize a student success agenda.	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
<hr/>						
<b>1.2</b>	<b>Commitment</b>					
<b>1.2 a</b>	Board expects, and president/chancellor provides, regular reports on student outcomes and the impact of efforts to improve success rates across all student groups.	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>1.2 b</b>	Senior leaders demonstrate willingness to support changes in policy, procedures, and resource allocation to improve student success.	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>1.2 c</b>	Faculty leaders actively support a culture of evidence and a broad-based student success agenda.	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>

Summarize your institution's strengths and weaknesses in **COMMITTED LEADERSHIP**:

**PRINCIPLE 2 Use of Evidence to Improve Policies, Programs, and Services**

Extent of implementation  
 little/none    increasing    a lot

**2.1 Information Technology (IT) and Institutional Research (IR) capacity**

- 2.1 a IT capacity is adequate to meet the demand for data and institutional research. 1 2 3 4 5
- 2.1 b Policies and procedures are in place to ensure integrity of data collected. 1 2 3 4 5
- 2.1 c IR staff capacity is adequate to meet demand for data analysis and research. 1 2 3 4 5
- 2.1 d IR staff effectively educates and assists college personnel to use data and research to improve programs and services. 1 2 3 4 5

**2.2 Process for identifying achievement gaps**

- 2.2 a College routinely collects, analyzes, and reports longitudinal data on cohorts of students to track student progression and outcomes. 1 2 3 4 5
- 2.2 b College routinely disaggregates student cohort data by age, race, gender, income, and other factors to identify gaps in achievement among student groups. 1 2 3 4 5
- 2.2 c College regularly conducts surveys and focus groups with students, faculty, and staff to identify strengths and weaknesses in programs and services, as well as opportunities for improvement. 1 2 3 4 5

**2.3 Process for formulating and evaluating solutions**

- 2.3 a College routinely engages faculty, staff, and others from across the campus community to review data on student achievement and help develop and refine strategies for addressing priority problems. 1 2 3 4 5
- 2.3 b College routinely evaluates the effectiveness of efforts to improve student success and uses the results to improve policy and practice. 1 2 3 4 5

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Summarize your institution's strengths and weaknesses in **USE OF EVIDENCE TO IMPROVE:**

## PRINCIPLE 3 Broad Engagement

		Extent of implementation				
		little/none	increasing	a lot		
<b>3.1</b>	<b>Faculty and staff</b>					
<b>3.1 a</b>	Faculty meets regularly to examine course and program outcomes and develop strategies for addressing achievement gaps and improving student success.	1	2	3	4	5
<b>3.1 b</b>	Faculty routinely assesses academic programs and teaching strategies from the perspective of current research on effective practice.	1	2	3	4	5
<b>3.1 c</b>	Part-time and/or adjunct faculty is actively engaged in institutional efforts to improve student success.	1	2	3	4	5
<b>3.1 d</b>	Student services staff routinely assesses student success strategies from the perspective of current research on effective practice.	1	2	3	4	5
<b>3.1 e</b>	There is alignment and extensive collaboration on efforts to improve student success between academic/instructional affairs and student services.	1	2	3	4	5
<b>3.2</b>	<b>Students and external stakeholders</b>					
<b>3.2 a</b>	College secures active student participation in efforts to improve student outcomes.	1	2	3	4	5
<b>3.2 b</b>	College secures input from external stakeholders to identify causes of achievement gaps and inform the development of strategies for improving student success.	1	2	3	4	5

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Summarize your institution's strengths and weaknesses in **BROAD ENGAGEMENT**:

**PRINCIPLE 4 Systemic Institutional Improvement**

		Extent of implementation				
		little/none	increasing	a lot		
<b>4.1</b>	<b>Institutional management</b>					
<b>4.1 a</b>	College has established a strategic planning process that relies on data to set goals for student success and to measure goal attainment.	1	2	3	4	5
<b>4.1 b</b>	Plans for a given year are driven by a limited set of strategic priorities that have a focus on student success.	1	2	3	4	5
<b>4.1 c</b>	College regularly evaluates its academic programs and student services to determine how well they promote student success and how they can be improved.	1	2	3	4	5
<b>4.1 d</b>	Decisions about budget allocations are based on evidence of program effectiveness and linked to plans to increase student success rates.	1	2	3	4	5
<b>4.1 e</b>	College uses external grant funds strategically to support systemic efforts to improve outcomes for students broadly, not just for isolated projects that benefit small numbers of students.	1	2	3	4	5
<b>4.1 f</b>	College actively works to scale up and sustain pilot programs or practices that prove effective.	1	2	3	4	5
<b>4.1 g</b>	Student success agenda is integrated with ongoing accreditation activity.	1	2	3	4	5
<hr/>						
<b>4.2</b>	<b>Organization</b>					
<b>4.2 a</b>	College has a standing committee or committees responsible for guiding and monitoring efforts to improve student outcomes.	1	2	3	4	5
<b>4.2 b</b>	Major meetings, organizational units, and work groups regularly focus on student success.	1	2	3	4	5
<hr/>						
<b>4.3</b>	<b>Professional development</b>					
<b>4.3 a</b>	College offers faculty and staff professional development that reinforces efforts to improve student success and to close achievement gaps.	1	2	3	4	5
<b>4.3 b</b>	Induction and orientation activities for new faculty and staff foster a commitment to student success.	1	2	3	4	5
<b>4.3 c</b>	College provides training to faculty and staff on using data and research to improve programs and services.	1	2	3	4	5

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Summarize your institution's strengths and weaknesses in **SYSTEMIC INSTITUTIONAL IMPROVEMENT**:

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How does Achieving the Dream fit with your institution's current goals and priorities?

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What other student success initiatives are currently in place at your institution?  
How would Achieving the Dream build on or work with these other efforts?

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What challenges will your institution face as it seeks to build a culture of evidence to support increased student success?





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