



## Framework for State Policies to Support Student Success

**JULY 2007**

The states participating in Achieving the Dream have worked with Jobs for the Future and with each other to develop the following framework specifying high leverage state policies that can promote student success in community colleges. The framework is organized as a kind of self-assessment tool: states can use this document to look at current policies, identify gaps, and set priorities for future efforts to strengthen state policies in the following areas that can make a difference to institutions and individuals:

- Data and Performance Measurement Systems
- Student Success
- K-12 and Postsecondary Alignment
- Transfer and Articulation (2-Year to 4-Year)
- Need-based Financial Aid

We present this tool for its diagnostic value, but also as a spur to discussion and debate about particular strategies and policy interventions proposed below. We see it as a living document that will be refined by states in Achieving the Dream as they discuss the implications of and opportunities presented by the various policy options presented here. Cross-state debate will ultimately sharpen the efforts of individual states to strengthen and add coherence to their success policies—and will also help states find a collective voice for promising state-level, regional, and national policy change.

We welcome comments and suggestions.

<b>DATA AND PERFORMANCE MEASUREMENT SYSTEMS</b>	No/Under Consideration/ In Process/Yes	Elaboration/Comments
<b><i>Features of a robust state data system</i></b>		
Does the state have a centralized data system to track the performance of community college students?		
Is the state data system built upon student-level unit records that track student performance across years and institutions?		
Does the system include demographic and program enrollment data?		
Does it include college placement test scores and other secondary school academic information?		
Does the state collect supplemental student information such as the Community College Survey of Student Engagement to help identify and track institutional practices associated with improved student outcomes?		
Does it include information on community college courses enrolled in and completed and grades earned?		
Does the state have the ability to share student-level information between K-12, community college, and other higher education data systems?		
Does the state have the ability to link to other state data bases (e.g. state UI and adult education)?		
<b><i>Features of a strong state performance measurement system</i></b>		
Does the state have an economical set of student performance measures tied to a clearly defined, limited set of strategic priorities?		
Is the system based on longitudinal measures that track student progress relative to benchmarks?		
Do the system's performance measures distinguish among students based on initial level of college readiness? If yes, is this based on placement test data?		

	No/Under Consideration/ In Process/Yes	Elaboration/Comments
Does the performance measurement system include controls for other student-level characteristics associated with different likelihoods of success, such as part-time versus full-time enrollment status or age at entry?		
Does the system include controls for institutional characteristics (e.g., size, resources for student) that allow for appropriate peer group comparisons of performance?		
Do the system's goals and benchmarks provide clear incentives for institutions to focus on raising the success rates of under-prepared and underserved students? If yes, please describe.		
Does the system include reasonable timeframes for achieving benchmarks, given high percentage of part-time students and students needing remediation?		
Does the performance measurement system include intermediate benchmarks that identify key first and second year "academic momentum" builders or predictors of long-term success? If yes, please describe.		
Do the system's reports allow consumers, policy makers, and practitioners to examine college and system performance and identify institutions that are achieving strong results with high-priority student subgroups?		
Is there a process for revising goals and measures in light of latest research evidence about key predictors of student success?		
<b><i>Features of state research capacity to support data-driven improvement</i></b>		
Does the state have the ability to produce research on key student performance issues and possible improvement strategies?		
Does the state have the ability to conduct analysis to inform the design of state policies and monitor their effectiveness?		
Does the state have the ability to provide colleges with user-friendly access to longitudinal data, data programming and research support, and training for institutional research staff?		
Does the state participate in cross-state projects that enable a state to benchmark community college system performance against, and to learn from, other states?		

STUDENT SUCCESS POLICIES	No/Under Consideration/ In Process/Yes	Elaboration/Comments
	<i>Incentives to institutions to improve student outcomes</i>	
Has the governor, the legislature, or system head of the community college system declared it a state priority to increase the community college success rate of low-income students and other underserved students?		
If yes, has the state set clear system goals and numeric targets for increasing the success rate?		
Is performance funding tied to retention and/or completion? Specify the mechanism, amount, and source of funding		
Is performance funding tied to improvements in low-income, underprepared students' success or narrowing of success gaps (e.g., funds to schools that increase retention and/or completion rates of Pell Grant recipients).		
Does the state provide funding or other resources (e.g. data analysis support) to encourage institutions to test new strategies to improve outcomes for students targeted by ATD?		
Does the state identify institutions that are achieving the best outcomes with student groups targeted by ATD and disseminate this information?		
Is performance funding to institutions tied to success of transfer students in four-year public institutions or the workforce?		
Are developmental education outcomes tracked and reported annually ( e.g., proportion of a cohort that complete sequence, take gatekeeper math or English courses, complete credentials)?		

	No/Under Consideration/ In Process/Yes	Elaboration/Comments
<b><i>Mandates for positive student academic behavior or decisions</i></b>		
Are students required to declare their program early? Are they provided adequate support for making informed decisions?		
Are students placed in development education required to begin developmental courses in the first semester in which they enroll after being assessed?		
Does the state make the placement/assessment test available on a voluntary basis to districts and schools that want to test their students' college-readiness in 11th or 12th grade?		
<b><i>Standardization of developmental education placement policies</i></b>		
Are new students required to take assessment tests for placement into developmental education? If there are exemptions, who is exempt or granted waivers?		
Are permissible assessment instrument(s) specified? If so, what tests are specified?		
Are institutions required to place students into developmental education based on assessment results?		
Are institutions required to use common cut scores to assign students to developmental courses? Is there a single cut score? A range?		
<b><i>Adequate funding for developmental education</i></b>		
Is funding of developmental education included in the formula for FTE funding?		
Are developmental courses funded at same level as college-level courses?		

<b>K-12 AND POSTSECONDARY ALIGNMENT POLICIES</b>	No/Under Consideration/ In Process/Yes	Elaboration/Comments
	<b><i>Alignment of secondary and postsecondary standards and curricula</i></b>	
Is a college preparatory curriculum the default for all students?		
Are college readiness standards clearly defined (e.g. statute, rule, policy, etc)? How is college readiness defined?		
Is the high school exit test aligned with college entrance standard and used for college placement?		
<b><i>Early assessment to identify academic weaknesses</i></b>		
Is the college readiness diagnostic test administered in junior or senior year to students who are likely to need remediation?		
Do high school students have an opportunity to improve skills based on performance on the diagnostic test?		
<b><i>Accountability system that incorporates college readiness</i></b>		
Does the state K-12 accountability system include measures of the college readiness of a school or district's high school graduates?		
Does the state accountability system include requirements that community colleges participate in partnerships with K-12 districts to improve college readiness and measures that track the results of these partnerships?		
Does the state provide feedback reports to high schools and school districts about the performance of their graduates in state colleges and universities?		
<b><i>Teacher preparation focuses on college-readiness</i></b>		
Are college readiness standards integrated into teacher professional development standards and programs?		

	No/Under Consideration/ In Process/Yes	Elaboration/Comments
<b>TRANSFER AND ARTICULATION POLICIES (2-YEAR TO 4-YEAR)</b>		
<b><i>Statewide agreements on transfer, articulation</i></b>		
Are transfer and articulation policies codified in statutes, bills, or resolutions?		
If there is no legislation, are there state-wide or system-wide cooperative transfer agreements?		
Does a statewide articulation guide describe transfer requirements and answers to Frequently Asked Questions?		
<b><i>Transfer monitored and encouraged</i></b>		
Is transfer data to four-year public institutions reported publicly and to sending colleges?		
Are there any incentives and rewards for students (or institutions) to encourage transfer (e.g., automatic admission, financial aid, tuition waiver, guaranteed transfer)?		
<b><i>Standardization of curricula to simplify credit transfer</i></b>		
Has a group of core courses been identified and agreed to as transferable from two year to four year public institutions?		
Are there common course numbers for same course at community college and four-year institutions?		

	No/Under Consideration/ In Process/Yes	Elaboration/Comments
<b>FINANCIAL AID POLICIES</b>		
<i>Access to financial aid for low-income students a priority</i>		
Has funding for existing financial aid policies and programs increased/decreased/stayed level in the past three years?		
Has funding for need-based financial aid policies and programs increased/decreased/stayed the same in the past three years?		
Has the state generated any new sources of funding for need-based financial aid in the past three years? Please specify.		
Do state financial aid policies provide support additional to tuition and fees?		
Is the state trying to increase the uptake of federal financial aid (e.g. state support for financial aid staff; systemwide protocols for supporting student applications, etc.)?		
<i>Financial aid program includes incentives for retention and completion</i>		
<p>Does the state need-based aid program reward student progress and completion?</p> <p>Examples:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Transfer scholarships (to keep down costs for years 3 and 4)</li> <li>• Aid structured in multiple disbursements tied to persistence;</li> <li>• Incentives that encourage students to increase enrollment intensity (e.g., from part time to full time).</li> </ul>		
<i>Efficacy of financial aid programs and policies is tracked</i>		
Does the state or system capture longitudinal data on the effect of financial aid receipt on persistence and completion?		
Does the state or system data track students who apply for financial aid but do not receive it?		

	No/Under Consideration/ In Process/Yes	Elaboration/Comments
<b><i>Non-traditional or underserved student populations, such as working adults or first generation college students, targeted for aid</i></b>		
<p>Does the state offer any special financial aid options to populations such as working adults and first generation college-goers?</p> <p>Examples:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Special programs or scholarships for special populations</li> <li>• Financial aid for developmental course-taking: allow aid for non-credit bearing courses, or extend the time limit for aid so as to support students through developmental education into college work</li> <li>• Financial aid for students in non-traditional programs and non-degree programs</li> <li>• Eligibility for less-than-half time students</li> <li>• Qualifying income limits higher than the Pell EFC</li> </ul>		