Achieving the Dream at 15
From Demonstration Project to Engine for Innovation, Transformation, and Results
Achieving the Dream at 15
Early and Significant Impact........................................................................................................4
The Origins of ATD’s Reform Efforts..........................................................................................6
  Initial Partners........................................................................................................................7
The Power of Partnership..........................................................................................................8
Becoming Achieving the Dream, Inc.........................................................................................10
A New Direction.....................................................................................................................12
  Three Pillars Anchor ATD’s Work.........................................................................................13
Reaching More Students Through New Services.....................................................................14
  Linking High School - College Success Networks...............................................................15
Spreading Innovation Across Community Colleges and Higher Education........................16
Achieving the Dream: Celebrating 15 Years.............................................................................18
2020 and Beyond..................................................................................................................19
Early and Significant Impact

ATD has had an early and significant impact on how colleges view student success and work to improve it.
By bolstering the knowledge base for institutional reform, developing a new framework for institutional transformation, and distinguishing exemplary institutions, ATD today helps colleges identify where they need to go and the path to get there. Specifically, ATD’s work has:

**Strengthened Data Capacity Across Institutions.**
ATD has elevated the role of institutional research and data analytics in community college decision making. Today, rather than fighting with their data and arguing about the quality of information or relevancy of metrics for success, institutions are acknowledging what they know and putting collective energy into improvement. They are intelligently and consistently measuring their outcomes and tracking their progress, using data to begin new, continuous improvement cycles.

**Made Institutions More Equitable.**
ATD’s focus on equity has been its North Star. Colleges in the network routinely scrutinize structural barriers to equity and invest in equity-minded policies, practices, and behaviors that lead to success for all students. Institutions are disaggregating data, reviewing their own policies and practices, and working to compensate for the disadvantages students experience before college and/or outside the college’s sphere of influence.

**Helped Institutions Bolster Results in Student Outcomes.**
As a result of these efforts, ATD colleges continue to make steady progress in narrowing achievement gaps and improving key outcomes. ATD institutions continue to focus on improving completion and ensuring students are ready for a career or further education, but they are also zeroing in on leading indicators that help track student progress toward their longer-term institutional goals. These include reducing the number of entering students taking developmental courses, and increasing developmental course success rates, gateway course completion rates, fall-to-fall persistence rates, and the number of degrees, certificates, and credentials conferred.

**Changed the Common Wisdom About Institutional Improvement.**
ATD engages in continuous evaluations of its approaches, R&D efforts, and impact, leading to important understandings of how the work of colleges and the organization can be improved. As one example, after the first ten years, ATD learned the importance of building interventions at scale as opposed to supporting disconnected, boutique pilot programs. Other lessons include the importance of institutions creating more coherence in student supports, the value of connecting entry-to-transition systems, and the benefits of connecting academic and non-academic supports to broader systems of our communities (K-12, universities, employers, community-based organizations). ATD’s work has shown how students gain further traction to degrees through developmental education that is redesigned to be accelerated, connected to programs, and customized to program and learner needs. Today, institutions have taken these lessons to heart. They are integrating and aligning their ATD work with strategic planning, accreditation, grants and development, and governance. They are engaging more strategically in institutional interventions and advancing only work that has potential to scale. They are developing organizational structures that combine information technology, institutional research, and institutional effectiveness and they have placed this work close to the president.

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**Led to More Inclusive Design and Decision Making.**
At ATD colleges, all key stakeholders—from trustees and senior leaders to full- and part-time faculty and staff, to students and the community—are involved in institutional redesign, from identifying new directions to implementation and delivery.

**Spread New Ideas Across Higher Education.**
Through learning initiatives that relate to emerging issues in the field, ATD has helped spread important knowledge about redesigning student advising, aligning career and academic pathways, accelerating developmental education, collaborating with industry on workforce development, engaging adjunct faculty, broadening the use of open education resources in community colleges, and other areas.

ATD’s approach over the past 15 years has shown an effective way for individual colleges within a network and an entire sector of higher education to work together to solve common problems and face new questions for students, graduates, and communities as they inevitably arise.
In 2004, the U.S. population was becoming more diverse and economically stratified. Economists and other researchers were projecting an urgent need for more college-educated workers in the emerging knowledge economy. At the same time, states were pulling back support for higher education, shifting the burden of paying for college more and more to students and their families. Rising college costs, the inability of state and federal student aid to keep up, and related student debt were causing public debates about the value of college. Low-income students and students of color, who were pouring into community colleges as undergraduate enrollments surged overall, were particularly affected by these factors. Unfortunately, despite high aspirations to complete degrees or certificates or transfer, the great majority of community college students did not achieve these goals.

At this time, the Lumina Foundation for Education was investing in the sector that educated the vast majority of low-income, first-generation college students. They brought together many of the leading thinkers to determine how to help community colleges achieve better outcomes, especially for underserved populations. The foundation established a five-year demonstration project called Achieving the Dream: Community Colleges Count, to effect changes in community college culture, policies, practices, and programs to support student success. The new initiative would provide planning and implementation funds, peer-learning opportunities, and coaching on leadership and use of data. It would reach colleges beyond the circle of Achieving the Dream grantees by disseminating information about student outcomes at its network colleges, including what they learned about policies and practices that improve outcomes. Using data and evidence and focusing on equity, ATD sought to elevate the role of institutional research in community college decision making and address underlying causes of achievement gaps. Community colleges would work intentionally to ensure that their institutions were a springboard to success for millions of students.

ATD’s founding, like its continued growth, was fueled by the power of shared ideas and collaborative decision making. The initiative grew from ideas drawn out of a broad array of experts at institutions across the spectrum of philanthropy, higher education, and nonprofit research as well as organizational development and social change organizations. Lumina envisioned a process that was co-created by experts and organizations with diverse points of view and asked senior vice president Leah Meyer Austin to launch and nurture the pilot. In a case study of ATD’s approach published by Grantmakers for Education, she reflected on the process:

“Our thinking was that if we sent out [a request for proposals] we were just going to have a run-of-the-mill initiative where organizations pick off chunks of the work, view it as a project, do their work, collect their money, and move on to the next grant and the next project. We wanted something in which our grantees would become so deeply invested that if we walked away from the work, they would continue it without us. I believe strongly that grantees have loyalty and dedication to what they design and create. What someone else imposes on them, they will view as a project and not a life’s work. Co-creation is the most basic principle when you want deep investment in social change.”

To oversee the demonstration project, Lumina first tapped MDC, an organization with a mission and expertise in improving education, employment, and economic security outcomes. MDC selected seven additional partners who would work together as peers, design the initiative, and take responsibility for key aspects of the work for its five-year duration. Over the next 10 months, the eight partners developed and tested all aspects of the design and an integrated action plan. By spring 2004, they had determined the initiative’s activities, expected outcomes, and work products.

The initial cohort of colleges included 27 institutions from five states. Those states—Florida, New Mexico, North Carolina, Texas, and Virginia—had significant and growing populations of first-generation and low-income college students and students of color, and numerous community colleges that could participate. Lumina made year-long planning grants and large five-year implementation grants to each college. ATD, with Jobs for the Future, also planned to work with states to bolster policies to allow colleges to be successful.

Achieving the Dream’s initial Board of Directors, 2004
Initial Partners

LUMINA FOUNDATION
Visionary founder and initial funder

MDC
Managing partner, incubated ATD’s emergence as an independent organization, led data coaching and fundraising, and performed numerous other key roles

AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF COMMUNITY COLLEGES
Helped recruit and select participating colleges and cohosted the annual DREAM conference, co-led the national policy work and stewarded the original database on institutional progress.

THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT AUSTIN
COMMUNITY COLLEGE LEADERSHIP PROGRAM, UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS played a significant role in recruiting, deploying, and overseeing the work of coaches

COMMUNITY COLLEGE RESEARCH CENTER, TEACHERS COLLEGE, COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY
Conducted research on key issues, including practices associated with student success, institutional research capacity at community colleges, and alternative frameworks for institutional change

INSTITUTE FOR HIGHER EDUCATION, UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA
Developed online courses to improve institutional research capacity

JOBS FOR THE FUTURE
Coordinated state and national policy work

MDRC
Led the initial evaluation of Achieving the Dream and examined implementation of improvement strategies at participating colleges.

PUBLIC AGENDA
Developed public engagement strategies, tools and approaches to hold conversations on campus about structural inequity and student success
The Power of Partnership

Partnerships with national and regional funders, institutions, and states enabled ATD to continue to grow.
Through the power of partnership, ATD continued to grow by gaining influence and support from an extensive web of national and regional funders, institutions, and states that invested time and resources and served as thought partners.

Lumina sought foundation partners to help spread ATD’s evidence-based approach and fund three more rounds of demonstration projects: KnowledgeWorks Foundation came on board, selecting and funding four colleges in Ohio, the Nellie Mae Foundation selected three Connecticut colleges and supported their planning and implementation work. In 2006, the initiative expanded to the states of Pennsylvania and Washington and to the Greater Houston area, bringing in 23 more institutions and three additional funders (The Heinz Endowments, College Spark Washington, and Houston Endowment Inc.), Lumina then sought to deepen and broaden the initiative’s work within several states already participating: Connecticut, Florida, New Mexico, North Carolina, Ohio, Texas, and Virginia.

Hawaii, Massachusetts, Michigan, Oklahoma, and South Carolina—and several institutions in Texas and Virginia had joined with a “self-funding” status. While some sites were pre-selected by the new funders, others were chosen through a competitive selection process during spring 2007. Colleges in Arkansas, Massachusetts, and Michigan received an initial planning grant in 2007-08 followed by larger four-year implementation grants from 2008 through 2012. In the other new states, colleges self-funded all or a portion of the cost of participating in ATD.

ATD’s institutional change model emphasized a continuous cycle of planning, testing, learning, trying new things, evaluating, and fine-tuning. The work within colleges required developing new ways for staff and faculty to work with students and each other, introducing more sophisticated data technology systems, and building inclusive teams to address key challenges. Early evaluations of ATD released by the Community College Research Council in 2006 indicated that participating colleges were meeting expectations, had strong leadership at the presidential level, and were organizing data to build a culture of evidence. Six colleges even showed signs of institutionalizing a culture of evidence after only one year. The colleges also were making broad foundational changes to improve student success by strengthening academic advising and orientation programs, revamping developmental education, and offering professional development for faculty and staff. The study showed that colleges had problems moving their use of data beyond collection and traditional compliance reporting. Other challenges related to the difficulty of building a new campus culture. Changing people’s thinking, communicating broadly to staff and students, and engaging faculty in the work, ATD knew, would take time and additional focus.
Becoming Achieving the Dream, Inc.

Transitioning the initiative into a permanent, independent entity.
The first major shift for the organization occurred in 2009, when the partners recognized that the model was not efficient on the scale necessary for ATD to be sustainable, so they began a new co-creative process: planning how to transition the initiative into a permanent, independent entity.

The partners engaged Bridgespan, consultants who were expert in helping nonprofits scale their work to advance social change, and determined that the best approach to move forward was to appoint an interim governing board to recruit a new chief executive officer, hire a full-time staff, and establish a headquarters for the proposed nonprofit. Lumina’s continued support gave other investors confidence to come through on their tentative commitments. The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation joined Lumina in making a substantial grant to launch the new nonprofit and hire the new CEO.

By January 2010, the transition was in full motion. Dr. William E. Trueheart, a foundation leader with a background in higher education and social entrepreneurship, became its first CEO. At the time, Dr. Trueheart had been president of the Pittsburgh Foundation and previously, president of Bryant University, a four-year college with a strong equity agenda, and president and CEO of Reading is Fundamental in its formative years.

Among other changes, ATD created a new tier of network participation—Leader Colleges—for institutions that had mastered the principles of reform, but wanted to move to the next level. Data facilitation was transferred from MDC to the nonprofit organization, which had relocated to the Washington, D.C., area. Over time, ATD moved other partner functions in house, established a permanent board of directors, and kept recruiting more talent so that it could take on the functions the partners had previously performed. Only a few functions, such as the state policy work led by Jobs for the Future and leadership coaching led by the University of Texas at Austin, continued at the partner level.

Under Dr. Trueheart, ATD’s network grew in size and the organization strengthened and fine-tuned its processes, based on knowledge gained from the field and hewing to its three original pillars: developing supports, such as coaching, for scaled solutions; disseminating knowledge by creating a peer-to-peer learning platform and holding an annual conference; and encouraging innovation by incubating new ideas.

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In 2011, MDRC, a leading social policy research firm and initiative partner, did an evaluation of ATD’s impact on the 26 colleges in the first cohort and found mixed results. It found that those colleges that made the greatest strides had broad-based involvement of administrators, faculty, and staff; strong institutional research departments that produced accessible reports on student achievement; regular evaluations of their programs; and scale-up of successful programs. The report helped ATD determine the best way to work with its colleges, such as institution wide reforms rather than small pilots and putting more effort into pedagogy and curriculum.
A New Direction

Staying true to its own principles to follow the data wherever they may lead, ATD put itself to the test, determining how it could use the findings to advance its work and become more effective.

ATD leaders knew they had to extend their work with institutions beyond the relatively narrow focus on data and leadership. They concluded that improving student outcomes had to be less about executing and learning from small projects, such as improving success courses, and more about practices applied broadly to keep more students in college by involving all faculty and staff in institution-wide transformation. Hearing what colleges were saying about their need for more guidance and pathways support, ATD expanded the extremely popular coaching services and used this valuable resource to forge in a new direction.

As ATD entered a new chapter of its development as a national reform organization, the board of directors sought to bring in an accomplished institutional change agent who could identify what challenges colleges were facing, guide development of an updated approach to improvement, and deliver deeper and more customized direction to institutions. In 2015, it appointed Dr. Karen A. Stout, president of Montgomery County Community College (PA), a leader in institutional transformation for student success, as the second president and CEO of the organization. In 2014, MCCC received the Leah Meyer Austin Award, the top national award for colleges in the ATD network, for its work to improve student outcomes in developmental courses, support students of color, and use data to make informed decisions about teaching and learning. Dr. Stout brought deep experience leading successful community college redesign, advocacy, and fundraising work to ATD.

During her first months as the organization’s new leader, Dr. Stout spent time on campuses of colleges in the ATD Network, meeting with leaders and exploring their needs. This “listening tour” gave Dr. Stout and her team an understanding of what challenges colleges in the network are facing, and how they are attempting to work through them. Using this knowledge, the leadership team began revising and rebuilding programs and services with a focus on attracting larger cohorts of new colleges. Under Dr. Stout’s leadership, ATD has made a concerted effort to further diversify the college network, focusing in particular on small and rural institutions and two- and four-year colleges that serve large percentages of low-income students and students of color. Since 2015, ATD has continued to add large numbers of colleges to its growing national network, including 34 tribal colleges and universities, with each cohort growing in size and diversity of institutions.

Using what Dr. Stout learned from her time with the network and understanding the changes in the greater higher education landscape, ATD refined, pilot tested, and ultimately launched a new capacity framework, championing a strengthened commitment to teaching and learning and non-academic supports, reinvigorating network recruitment, and launching a new strategic direction.

“Improving student success starts with a clear vision of what student success means and a commitment to ensuring that as we do our daily work, we challenge ourselves to ask, “How is this decision improving the economic and social mobility of the students we are serving and, thereby, strengthening the community we serve?”

– Dr. Karen A. Stout, President and CEO, Achieving the Dream
INSTITUTIONAL CAPACITY ASSESSMENT TOOL (ICAT)

Based on research and experience from the field and from ATD coaches, the organization identified seven key capacity areas that together create a student-focused culture that sustains success. It created a rubric-based self-assessment instrument closely associated with the framework to assess performance across each of the seven capacities. The Institutional Capacity Assessment Tool (ICAT), developed and tested in partnership with 10 ATD Network colleges in 2016, is now used throughout the network not only to measure capacity across each area but to fully engage faculty and staff in the planning process. A refreshed 1.5 version is set to be released in early 2020.

Three pillars anchor ATD’s work

1. COACH
   Initial diagnostics and customized coaching help strengthen the institution’s leadership and data-analysis capacity. Professional coaches help institutions improve their ability to track leading indicators that research has shown lead to improved student retention and completion and identify and address achievement gaps. Ongoing coaching helps address key challenges—from looking deeply at how to improve teaching and learning, to how to build more robust partnerships with business and community partners.

2. CONNECT
   Institutions and their leaders learn from and with their peers through a closely connected network that includes summits, institutes, and webinars, and reports, briefs, and guides that provide information about best practices across institutions. The Network draws from the expertise of ATD Leader Colleges and Leader Colleges of Distinction, which have met important institutional benchmarks, as well as other institutions that have, as a group, significant experience in all aspects of campus transformation.

3. INNOVATE
   ATD helps introduce and scale innovative new approaches such as creating a culture of teaching and learning excellence and redesigning student supports to integrate across all areas of the institution. ATD identifies more effective ways to scale proven approaches, such as refining and expanding structured academic and career pathways.
ATD’s new strategic direction, introduced in 2017, stresses services that are customized to where colleges are in their student success journeys; and to new areas like evidence-based leadership, holistic student supports, pathways, teaching and learning, and equity.

Results of the first decade had demonstrated that changing the college culture can change outcomes, but it has to be backed by a robust set of services that not only affect the conditions required for change but build institutional capacity to bring it about.

ATD’s new strategy would help colleges measure their institutional capacities and listen to what college leaders say they need; then match those needs with new services designed from ATD’s work implementing innovations and numerous R&D initiatives.

Following its own advice and guidance to colleges to adjust their models, practices, and services for an equity focus and stronger outcomes, ATD redesigned its network approach with input from its colleges.

The new customized model offers colleges a diverse suite of unique supports, programs, and resources that specifically match their student success needs and are available to institutions within or outside of the ATD Network.

Launched in 2017, the model offers a number of service options of various intensities, durations, and price points for institutions to select from to meet their needs and advance their student success work.

To move to this customized approach, ATD made several changes in coaching. It is expanding coaching and mentoring to deploy a broader range of expert technical help through specialized coaches across the capacity areas and through expanded peer learning. ATD also is working to deepen its technical assistance capacity and aligning all college services, learning events, and grant initiatives to feed the seven capacity areas.

ATD coaching is central to helping colleges set goals and measure progress; connect institutions to expertise, technical assistance, and resources; foster a culture of accountability, inquiry, evidence, and collaboration; develop priorities and action plans; and leverage and analyze data for use across the institution. Recently, ATD moved leadership coaching from the University of Texas at Austin to be delivered in-house within the ATD organization where ATD’s data coaching work resides.

In 2018, ATD developed a new line of Holistic Student Services that helps colleges introduce a seamless, personalized student experience that connects students to crucial academic and nonacademic supports they need to reach their educational and career goals. ATD coaching, technical assistance, planning tools, and guidebooks help create a student experience in which there is “no wrong door” and the student is seamlessly connected to essential resources and just-in-time supports.

Based on 15 years of experience working with community colleges on student-centered and equity-based systems design, ATD launched services in 2019 to help colleges develop a culture of teaching and learning excellence by engaging full-time and adjunct faculty in leadership and professional learning roles that advance pedagogy; implementing inclusive, evidence-based, high-impact, culturally responsive practices; and providing opportunities for action research, reflection, and renewal.
On April 1, 2019, Gateway to College National Network became part of Achieving the Dream, a move that further extends the organization’s work into helping its colleges build stronger K-12 connections to serve the most vulnerable young people in our communities. This addition to ATD’s work will link high school/college student success networks to improve college readiness, expand personalized student supports, and broaden services to help colleges graduate more students from vulnerable populations—the core of the ATD mission. Bringing Gateway to College into ATD allows the organization to bridge secondary and postsecondary education and will help institutions and their communities establish a continuum of services that better position low-income youth and young adults to earn needed credentials and degrees to succeed in the workforce. The merger allows ATD to further expand its focus on equity and leverage tools, coaching, expertise, and relationships to strengthen its support for its network of colleges. ATD will now have the capability to help colleges expand K-12/community college partnerships, dual enrollment programs, and innovations in customized delivery of holistic services for nontraditional student populations.

Linking High School-College Student Success Networks

Another component of the new strategy included adding a national network to the organization.

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Creating a Culture of Teaching Excellence

Despite the progress colleges have made in introducing pathways, restructuring student services, and tackling barriers to student success outside the classroom, institutions have largely neglected doing what it takes to create a culture of teaching and learning excellence on campus. To address this problem, in 2018, ATD created a framework for improving teaching and learning. The approach was announced by ATD president and CEO Dr. Karen A. Stout in the 2018 Dallas Herring Lecture at North Carolina State University, which identified three broad changes required by institutions:

1. Full-time and adjunct faculty are using inclusive, evidence-based instructional practices to foster student learning.
2. Students are engaged as active learners in an accessible, empowering, personalized, and supportive academic climate.
3. Institutions are creating an organizational culture that embraces professional learning for continuous improvement.

The basic building blocks to establish the culture, which is the focus of new ATD services that will be introduced, includes:

- **ADOPTING CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT MODELS** to drive innovation in curriculum and pedagogy.
- **CREATING A HUB OF INNOVATION ON CAMPUS** by investing in underfunded and underutilized Centers for Teaching and Learning.
- **SUPPORTING FACULTY** to approach their work from the diverse set of lived experiences, skills, and knowledge that their students bring into the classroom. This includes helping faculty become a critical link between students and the services and supports they need to be successful.

Developing and investing in an explicit adjunct faculty engagement strategy. Part-time faculty comprise about two-thirds of faculty at community colleges but often report feeling professionally isolated with limited outreach to orient them to culture and, often, limited access to campus.
Spreading Innovations Across Community Colleges and Higher Education

The work of innovation is essential not only to help community colleges but to help all open-access institutions implement reforms and put students on solid ground for success in school and beyond. The following are recent efforts leading to new services that have enriched the ATD Network.

**STRUCTURED PATHWAYS.** In October 2015, 30 colleges were selected to design and implement structured academic and career pathways to scale for all of their students through the Pathways Project, led by the American Association of Community Colleges in partnership with ATD, seven other organizations and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. Of these 30 institutions, 21 are current ATD institutions and two are former ATD institutions, that are well prepared to move confidently into such comprehensive change. This is not a coincidence, as implementing the ATD model has helped these colleges build the organizational capacities to confidently move into and be successful in the pathways work.

**NON-ACADEMIC SUPPORTS.** In 2015, ATD led the scale-up of a broad effort to introduce a fresh, holistic approach to student success and equity by taking into account family and work responsibilities, financial needs beyond tuition, and the financial knowledge students need to sustain the other aspects of their lives. The three-year Working Students Success Network (WSSN) initiative brought together 19 colleges in four states to help students gain financial skills and career experience to successfully earn credentials and find jobs that pay family-sustaining wages. Funded by the Annie E. Casey Foundation, Bank of America Charitable Foundation, Bank of America Charitable Trust, and the Leona M. and Harry B. Helmsley Charitable Trust, iPASS helped institutions use technology to enhance and streamline course advising, selection, and registration and track student progress to improve academic decision making. Coming out of this work, in 2018, ATD offered a new experience for colleges, Holistic Student Supports, to help them accelerate their learning and integrate their student support redesign work across the entire institution.

**CAREER PATHWAYS AND CAREER DEVELOPMENT.** ATD also continued to collaborate with Jobs for the Future on STEM Regional Collaboratives to help colleges develop close partnerships with employers, P-12 school systems, and community organizations to strengthen their middle-skill STEM pathways. With support from the Walmart Foundation, ATD worked with four colleges to implement a Strengthening Pathways to Retail Careers initiative, which was designed to lead to higher, family sustaining wages in the retail and hospitality industries. ATD also facilitated a grant from the U.S. Department of Labor to support workforce development, awarded to Passaic Community College. ATD helped build a coalition of seven colleges, led the proposal design work, and supported their learning community. The Northeast Resiliency Consortium work gave workers credit for previous learning and built regional capacity to retrain the unemployed, veterans, and workers in critical occupations, such as healthcare, information technology, and environmental technology. In 2016, ATD also launched a 16-month initiative designed to build a manufacturing talent pipeline in three communities. The initiative allowed the organization to deepen its understanding of the skills colleges need to engage key community stakeholders such as employers in efforts that help more students achieve their academic and employment goals.

**ADJUNCT FACULTY.** Beginning in 2016, ATD has led the Engaging Adjunct Faculty in the Student Success Movement, a two-year planning and implementation effort to empower adjunct faculty to improve instruction and become more deeply engaged in student success initiatives. It involves six ATD leader colleges and is funded by The Leona M. and Harry B. Helmsley Charitable Trust and the Great Lakes Higher Education Guaranty Corporation (now Ascendium Education Group). The Community College Research Center (CCRC) serves as a third-party evaluator for the project, documenting the strategies employed, stakeholder experiences with implementation, and project outcomes. ATD introduced its new line of services in 2018-2019 to help institutions to create a culture of excellence in teaching and also addressed supporting efforts by colleges to implement OER and accelerate developmental education.

**STRENGTHENING PARTNERSHIPS BETWEEN COMMUNITY COLLEGES AND HUMAN SERVICES NPOS.** In 2019, The Kresge Foundation announced a $3.6 million funding opportunity to strengthen partnerships between community colleges and human services nonprofits that connect people with low incomes in cities to critical human service supports and educational pathways that advance social and economic mobility. The initiative, Boosting Opportunities for Social and Economic Mobility for Families (BOOST), builds on Kresge’s commitment to strengthen urban higher education ecosystems and work across teams to accelerate social and economic mobility using a racial equity lens. Through BOOST, Kresge will award up to eight three-year grants of up to $450,000 each to qualifying partnerships between community colleges active in the Achieving the Dream Network and human services nonprofits.

**PLANNING AND ADVISING.** In 2015, ATD began offering technical assistance on planning, implementation, progress monitoring, and change management to 14 of the 24 colleges and universities selected to participate in the Integrated Planning and Advising for Student Success (IPASS) program, a two-year planning and implementation project. Funded by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and the Leona M. and Harry B. Helmsley Charitable Trust, iPASS helped institutions implement OER and accelerate developmental education.
“What is important as we make these changes is that our commitment to equitable student outcomes, data-informed practice, and deploying coaches that help colleges build important habits remain central to our theory of action.”

– Dr. Karen A. Stout, President and CEO, Achieving the Dream

Open Education Resources

The OER Degree Initiative, which included 38 colleges in 13 states, was launched in 2016 to help institutions develop dynamic openly licensed content into course redesign, create full OER degree programs, and save students money by eliminating the need to purchase textbooks. The three-year effort is producing a library of high-quality, digital, open courses that ATD will make available to other colleges and the public. The initiative's funding ($9.8 million) comes from a consortium of investors that includes the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, the Great Lakes Higher Education Guaranty Corporation (Ascendium), the Shelter Hill Foundation, and the Speedwell Foundation. A study released in 2018 examined implementation of the OER Degree Initiative found significant benefits to instruction and student learning experiences as well as savings for students who used OER. The study, Participant Experiences and Financial Impacts: Findings from Year 2 of Achieving the Dream’s OER Degree Initiative, reported that students who use OER find them to be accessible, relevant, and engaging. Over 60 percent of students reported that the overall quality of their learning experience in an OER course was higher in comparison to a typical, non-OER course. The research, conducted by SRI International and rpk GROUP, is the second in a series of studies on OER implementation released by ATD. The third and final report is scheduled for release in early 2020.

Aspen Prize

Achieving the Dream was proud to congratulate two of our network colleges, Indian River State College and Miami Dade College, who were named co-winners of the 2019 Aspen Prize for Community College Excellence. The $1 million Aspen Prize, awarded every two years, is the nation’s signature recognition of high achievement and performance among America’s community colleges. The Prize highlights institutions with outstanding achievements in four areas: student learning, certificate and degree completion, employment and earnings, and high levels of access and success for minority and low-income students. In working with network colleges, Achieving the Dream focuses on academic success, personal growth, and economic opportunity, particularly with low-income students and students of color. “I’m thrilled and proud that two network colleges are sharing the 2019 Aspen Prize,” said Dr. Karen A. Stout. “They’ve shown an exceptional commitment to their students and a strong commitment to change, and have embraced the powerful foundation that ATD’s institutional capacity-building approach has contributed to their efforts to improve the college experience for all of their students.” Among the more than 1,000 eligible public community colleges, 10 finalists were chosen for the award. Of the 10 finalists, eight were in the ATD Network, another confirmation that the alignment of our work focuses with what the Aspen Institute identifies as critical to high performing institutions.

Supporting Institutional Transformation at Tribal Colleges

Under-resourced, minority-serving colleges often lack the fundamental institutional capacities that enable them to undertake the kinds of whole-college transformation efforts such as structured pathways and developmental education reform that lead to significant improvement in student outcomes. Beginning in 2017, ATD has been working with 32 tribal colleges and universities (TCUs) to support institutional transformation and capacity building with the goal of improving student success. Participating colleges have conducted a capacity assessment with ATD and have received dedicated data and leadership coaching services, including full participation in the ATD Network. This important work is supported by the Leona M. and Harry B. Helmsley Charitable Trust, the American Indian Higher Education Consortium, and Ascendium Education Group.

In 2018, TCUs new to the ATD Network began their deep dive into understanding the importance and use of disaggregated data to identify at-risk students and target and evaluate interventions to improve outcomes among various subgroups of students. Because of their work, ATD is learning more about how TCUs create conditions for the success of their students through intentional design and are encouraging TCUs to share their expertise within the ATD Network.
### 2004–2009

**Demonstration Years:**

Creating Proof of Concept

Lumina Foundation and 8 founding partners: American Association of Community Colleges, Community College Leadership Program, Community College Research Center, Institute for Higher Education, Jobs for the Future, MDC, MDRC, Public Agenda launch Achieving the Dream: Community Colleges Count to catalyze change in community college culture, policy, and practice so that more students, particularly low-income students and students of color, persist and earn credentials – the new agenda is both access and success.

Pilot colleges are supported by leadership coaches who advise on managing the change process and data coaches who help build data capacity, while peer learning events nurture a national learning community.

Disaggregating their data, colleges discover significant differences in retention and completion among student groups and design interventions to address these challenges.

Research partners discover that fewer than one in 10 developmental education students at ATD Network colleges earn a credential within eight years; colleges respond with dev ed reforms, orientation, success courses, and other first-year experience improvements.

A Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation supported Developmental Education Initiative to scale effective innovations becomes the first major ATD learning initiative.

The network grows to 110 colleges and 15 state policy teams facilitated by Jobs for the Future work to create policy environments that support innovation and evidence-based decision making.

Twenty-one colleges have evidence of upward trends in student outcomes and become Leader Colleges; the Leah Meyer Austin Award is created to recognize colleges making substantive improvements in equity and excellence with the inaugural award given to Valencia College; each year since, one or more colleges have been honored for their achievements which serve as examples of what can be done to improve student outcomes.

### 2010–2014

Creating the Infrastructure to Support and Sustain the National Reform Network

ATD Inc is created to lead and sustain the national reform work; Dr. William E. Trueheart, national expert in creating new nonprofits, becomes inaugural President/CEO.

Colleges begin to move away from discrete interventions and change at the margins to prioritize institution-wide transformation involving more faculty and staff.

New learning initiatives test innovations to increase the financial capacity of students; scale successful developmental education reforms; use Leader Colleges as mentor institutions; improve middle skill STEM pathways; and align academic and career training, work supports, and asset building skills for low-income students.

Northeast Resiliency Consortium comprising seven community colleges, ATD and the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching awarded grant from U.S. Department of Labor’s Trade Adjustment Assistance Community College Career and Training (TAACCCT) program to develop training programs committed to creating a highly skilled and resilient workforce.

ATD joins Aspen Institute to call attention to developing the college leadership pipeline and undertakes activities to support current presidents while also preparing the next generation of innovative leaders.

One hundred seven colleges join Network, 37 colleges earn Leader College status, and seven colleges are selected to participate in Completion by Design, in part laying groundwork for the guided pathways movement.

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ATD is working with colleges to develop an equity vision that describes the experience they want for their incoming students and to establish strategic steps to implement on their campuses. While many of the colleges in the ATD Network are seeing achievement gaps narrow or close, especially for Hispanic populations, the gap for Black students is widening on many campuses. ATD is focusing on providing opportunities and activities to help colleges develop a deeper understanding of what equity means, what it looks like in practice, and how it is manifested or stifled on their campuses.

ATD will lead the next wave of data-informed decision making in higher education by helping colleges utilize new tools to help understand the student experience, proactively provide needed student supports, and track impact. ATD is championing the need for new metrics to measure the impact after students leave an institution (tracking wages, employment, social benefits, and more) and on the communities’ economic and civic health. ATD will work with its colleges on new metrics that help them estimate their impact on students and community, measuring the ROI of work for students and the community, not the institution.

The signature coaching model of ATD will continue to grow and adapt to provide professional guidance that includes content-expert support in the areas of teaching and learning, equity, and holistic student supports, in addition to leadership and data coaching. The coaching cadre will continue to grow and diversify as the needs of its colleges change.

ATD will continue to help the philanthropic community identify future investments that will accelerate the pace of change, align the work, and expand the reach of initiatives to address the needs of underserved students. The organization will build on its role as a conduit for innovation, helping colleges in its network implement fresh approaches to achieve their objectives for student success, and for connection, providing a breadth of opportunities through peer-to-peer learning and networking.