Community College Women Succeed Student Testimonial Videos

Achieving the Dream Discussion Guide

2019-2020
About Community College Women Succeed

Community College Women Succeed is an initiative of Achieving the Dream to identify and promote effective strategies and resources to create, expand, and evaluate work to support adult women students and student mothers and their success in community college and the workforce. This work includes:

- engaging with thought leaders throughout the country, including Achieving the Dream Network Colleges, to learn about gaps and promising practices in supporting adult women
- hosting regional focus groups with adult women students and elevating the student voice nationally
- reviewing existing research and identifying retention trends
- and partnering with a cross-section of stakeholders to create resources

To succeed in this work, we must understand who our students are and their unique needs. This includes the large number of community college students who are adults, including students who are mothers. As a result of this movement, Achieving the Dream Network colleges are increasing their evidence-based supports so more community college women succeed. When women graduate from college, they and their families have better economic opportunities.

About this Discussion Guide

This discussion guide profiles the stories of several adult women students charting new paths for themselves and their families. Their experiences both on and off campus will help inform our understanding of the supports and culture that we can develop and enhance on our campuses in order to provide these students the support they need to achieve their educational goals. We invite Achieving the Dream Network colleges to use this guide and accompanying videos to broaden the dialogue on campus about how best to support student parents. You may share the videos featuring critical student voices and add to the conversation on social media by using the hashtag #CCWomenSucceed.

Please convene a discussion group to view each testimonial video and then read through the questions, prompting a conversation about the best ways to serve our adult women students. Take notes along the way and determine how you will incorporate them into your college’s plans to support this group on your campus and in your community.
Natasha

Pursuing her dream of graduating has been the biggest motivation for Natasha while attending community college. Her desire to be her own hero gives her the confidence to battle challenges as they arise.

View Natasha’s video by clicking on this photo or visiting this link: https://tinyurl.com/CCWomenSucceedNatasha

A. Adult women students aged 25 years and older and women students with dependent children typically struggle to immerse themselves in campus activities. What supports can your institution offer to help students engage on campus?

B. How does your college support adult women students on campus? What about women students with dependent children? What additional supports might increase these students’ success given what you know about these student groups?

C. What supports does your college offer for students who are homeless?
Marissa

Pursuing higher education gave Marissa a means to independence. Her desire for a career that she feels passionate about gave her the motivation to transfer to Northampton Community College.

View Marissa’s video by clicking on this photo or visiting this link: https://tinyurl.com/CCwomenSucceedMarissa

A. In your community, what obstacles to attending college do adult women face?

B. What information do you provide your students regarding degree options and career pathways? How accessible is this information to your students?

C. Many adult students work full-time. In what ways does your college provide resources and flexibility for women who have work and child care responsibilities in addition to their schoolwork?

D. How does your college promote supports for women students with dependent children? How are faculty made aware of these supports so they may direct students to them?
The networking opportunities Jackie has experienced while attending community college offer her hands-on experience that complements her studies. She feels that counseling at her college provides students with the support that they need through any circumstance.

View Jackie’s video by clicking on this photo or visiting this link: https://tinyurl.com/CCWomenSucceedJackie

A. How do students at your college learn about available supports?

B. What ideas do you have to better streamline and centralize student supports so students only need to tell their story once?

C. How is your college tracking data to understand adult women students’ momentum towards a degree? What are some of the barriers faced in tracking these data?
Nicole

Nicole’s work-study opportunities give her valuable hands-on learning experience. The flexible and welcoming nature of her campus community helps her prepare for her career.

View Nicole’s video by clicking on this photo or visiting this link: https://tinyurl.com/CCWomenSucceedNicole

A. Flexible scheduling options allowed Nicole to overcome barriers to attending class and work. How do students who are juggling many important responsibilities experience your college?

B. In what ways does your college empower faculty to create changes that better serve students in and outside of the classroom?
Robin

Robin relies on the support of other mothers in her program as well as resources the college offers student parents. She is motivated by the pride her children feel in her ongoing education.

View Robin’s video by clicking on this photo or visiting this link: https://tinyurl.com/CCWomenSucceedRobin

A. How would you guide a student like Robin at your college as she prepares to begin courses?

B. How do the perspectives and experiences of adult women students add value to the classroom and your college?

C. What about your college would you like to promote to student parents?

D. In what ways does your college engage with local employers to offer students work-based learning opportunities?
Antoinette

Affordability was Antoinette’s main priority when considering community college. She attended and has now completed her program and has now begun her career which dramatically increases her chances of economic mobility.

View Antoinette’s video by clicking on this photo or visiting this link: https://tinyurl.com/CCWomenSucceedAntoinette

A. Access to reliable and affordable childcare was instrumental to Antionette’s success. What childcare supports are available to student parents who attend your college?

B. What strategies does your college use to accelerate student learning and decrease students’ time to degree?

C. What valuable knowledge, skills, and abilities do adult women students and student parents bring to the workplace?
Achieving the Dream leads a growing network of more than 275 community colleges committed to helping their students, particularly low-income students and students of color, achieve their goals for academic success, personal growth, and economic opportunity.

ATD is making progress in closing academic achievement gaps and accelerating student success through a unique change process that builds each college’s institutional capacities in seven essential areas.

ATD, along with nearly 75 experienced coaches and advisors, works closely with Network across the country to reach more than 4 million community college students.

www.achievingthedream.org

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