NEWS RELEASE

11 States to Work Toward Improving Student Success at Community Colleges

States will leverage their participation in the Postsecondary State Policy Network to implement long-lasting reforms so more students can earn a market-valued credential

Silver Spring, MD (November 27, 2012) – Achieving the Dream, Inc., a national nonprofit leading the nation’s most comprehensive non-governmental reform network for community college student success and completion, today announced the participation of five states in the Postsecondary State Policy Network – Connecticut, Hawai’i, Massachusetts, Oklahoma, and Virginia.

A total of 11 states were selected to participate in the Postsecondary State Policy Network, which is an initiative led by Jobs for the Future in conjunction with Achieving the Dream – Arkansas, Connecticut, Florida, Hawai’i, Massachusetts, Michigan, North Carolina, Ohio, Oklahoma, Texas, and Virginia.

The policy network’s objective is two-fold: to help states design administrative, system and legislative policies that support institutional reform strategies; and to spread across the states the lessons and models emerging from efforts to define effective and efficient student pathways to completion.

One way that state policy teams will spread promising practices, challenges, and lessons learned is through cross-state meetings. The first of those meetings will take place November 27 in Boston, MA. Representatives from the states, Achieving the Dream, and Jobs for the Future will be in attendance. Attendees will discuss their work; specifically, how they will improve student services so more students can succeed in college.

In the coming year, Achieving the Dream supported states will pursue a range of evidence-based reform initiatives, from piloting performance-based scholarships and improving transfer success, to fundamentally transforming the delivery of developmental education. These reforms are crucial in meeting the national demand for a more college-educated citizenry.
“The states that are joining together in this effort are leaders in innovation to improve student success and completion,” said Richard Kazis, Senior Vice President, Jobs for the Future. “The Postsecondary State Policy Network provides them with a high-impact vehicle for efficient sharing of proven strategies for implementing policies that make a difference.”

**Critical Juncture**

Community colleges and states today face a tremendous challenge: educate more students than ever – a significant number of whom are underprepared – in an era of decreased budgets. All the while, the nation demands increases in student performance outcomes. For many states, this new normal is creating a ripe environment for innovation and sweeping reform. Connecticut, Hawai’i, Massachusetts, Oklahoma, and Virginia are committed to exploring, supporting, and helping scale promising statewide reforms that can create meaningful academic and career pathways for all students.

“While a significant number of the students walking through the community college front door may not be college-ready, Achieving the Dream and our National Reform Network believe that all students walking through the door are college-material,” said Carol Lincoln, Senior Vice President, Achieving the Dream. “We will work closely with our policy states to ensure that the reforms are guided by our values of equity, excellence, and evidence.”

**The History and Role of State Policy at Achieving the Dream**

Since 2004, state policy reform has been an integral part of the bold goal set forth by Achieving the Dream – to dramatically increase success for all community college students. These efforts have been and continue to be led by Jobs for the Future. Community colleges cannot and should not do this work alone. States are leveraging policy as a powerful force to help the efforts of community colleges working to close achievement gaps and increase student success and completion.

Some of the most promising advances in student success are in states where community college leaders and state policy-makers are working together as partners as they take well-informed, mutually-reinforcing reform decisions anchored in equity and excellence.

The Virginia Community College System is a prime example of this partnership at work. In collaboration with its college stakeholders it has embarked on a large-scale and transformative redesign of developmental education. The system has implemented a sequence of math modules, an integrated reading and writing curriculum, and a new assessment and placement protocol across all 23 of its community colleges.

In its current strategic plan, Achieve 2015, the state system aims at a 50 percent increase in the number of community college students who earn a degree, transfer to a four-year institution, or earn a workforce credential. For students from groups traditionally underrepresented in higher education, the target is a 75 percent increase.
Postsecondary State Policy Network
The Postsecondary State Policy Network, led by Jobs for the Future in conjunction with the Achieving the Dream National Reform Network, is a multi-state collaboration committed to advancing state policy agendas that accelerate community college student success and completion. The network evolved out of the state policy efforts for the Achieving the Dream National Reform Network, including the Developmental Education Initiative. The network includes 11 states that are continuing their work with support from Achieving the Dream and the Completion by Design and Student Success Center initiatives. JFF helps teams from the 11 network states maximize peer learning and develop and implement policies that promote community college student success. To learn more about the Postsecondary State Policy Network and the individual states involved, click here.

Jobs for the Future
Jobs for the Future works with its partners to design and drive adoption of education and career pathways leading from college readiness to career advancement for those struggling to succeed in today’s economy.

Achieving the Dream, Inc.
Achieving the Dream, Inc. is a national nonprofit that is leading the nation’s most comprehensive non-governmental reform network for community college student success in higher education history. The Achieving the Dream National Reform Network includes leaders from nearly 200 colleges and 15 policy states, and more than 100 coaches and advisors, working to close achievement gaps and accelerate community college student success and completion nationwide. Ultimately, the Network helps 3.75 million community college students have a better chance of realizing greater economic opportunity and achieving their dreams.