



Achieving the Dream™

Community Colleges Count

2017

LEAH MEYER
AUSTIN AWARD

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MIAMI
DADE
COLLEGE

Achieving the Dream's Leah Meyer Austin Award, generously supported in 2017 by the Kresge Foundation, annually recognizes an Achieving the Dream college that has demonstrated outstanding progress in designing a student-focused culture found at all levels and in all structures of the organization. Award-winning institutions take bold action to design policies, processes, and programs that reinforce each other in a comprehensive strategy to achieve the institution's student success and equity goals. Their approach aligns whole-college solutions, resulting in significant and sustainable institutional improvement and greater success for all students.

Founded in 1960, Miami Dade College (MDC) serves over 165,000 students on eight campuses and 21 outreach centers in Florida's Miami-Dade County. MDC is the institution of higher education in the United States enrolling more Hispanic undergraduate students and awarding more associate degrees than any other college in the country.

Achieving the Dream is pleased to present the 2017 Leah Meyer Austin Award to Miami Dade College. The award celebrates the college's extraordinary progress in transforming the college culture and implementing comprehensive reform at large scale in support of student success.

Long recognized for its innovative work, Miami Dade College (MDC) found itself in a quandary. Assessing its student performance data in 2010, the college realized that too many barriers prevented too many students from staying in college or completing academic programs. Unstructured student pathways, too many academic choices, misaligned support, and unclear or inconsistent information all took a toll on student outcomes. To address that complicated set of challenges, the college undertook a bold, comprehensive, and institution-wide series of changes to transform the student experience and institutional culture.

The process of designing the change engaged many campus voices. Starting in 2011, teams analyzed student data, developed hypotheses about obstacles to completion, reviewed literature, and conducted surveys and focus groups. They adopted a guided pathway model to redesign academic and student services that support a student's journey. Named for the college's mascot, "Shark Path" is an intentional weave of strategies, programs, activities, and interventions that aligns academic and support services and guides students from before they enter college to completion of a credential and transition to either a baccalaureate program or the workplace.

The Shark Path includes academic maps that help students reach graduation as quickly as possible while incurring minimal financial burden. A new student onboarding process and a first-year experience course help smooth the transition from high school to college, while an early alert system identifies students who struggle academically and matches them with needed advising. Students are assigned to advisors starting when they are still in high school and progressing to when they are in their first year of college and beyond.

"Either in the planning for this work, the development of the strategies, or the actual implementation and assessment of the work, everything was implemented college-wide at large scale," says Susan Mayer, Senior Partner and Leadership Coach for Miami Dade College's Student Achievement Initiatives, a partnership between the college, Completion by Design, and Achieving the Dream. The college's early reform work was pivotal in the sense that it showed people that they could accomplish large-scale implementation, Mayer says.

That momentum was put to the test about two years into the reform effort when the legislature changed state rules for developmental education, exempting students who graduated from high school after 2007 from taking placement tests. Because students were no longer required to take developmental education courses, the legislation changed the way students entered the college and the first courses they took. The college had to pivot in real time to meet this new challenge by adapting skills, experience, and institutional capacity that it had been developing as part of its overall reform effort.

The college designed clearer pathways to support students who need proficiency in algebra for their programs of study as well as those who do not need algebra. Math courses were redesigned to

make them more relevant to courses of study. Gateway English classes were also redesigned.

The college came to see that its ability to respond to the challenge that the new legislations presented constituted a major new stage in its reform work.

Further Mayer notes, the new work led to a shift in focus from equality to equity. "When we started out, we were thinking about a very broad-brush approach that delivered services like advising and orientation that were much more supportive than students had had before but were not really targeted to the individual needs of the students. When the developmental education changes came, it forced us to think about things like early alerts and interventions and math pathways and a curriculum that was more targeted to the needs of students."

MDC's reform work had a profound impact on the college's culture. The cross-functional pollination of the work created a foundation of mutual trust and collaboration. College leadership encouraged teams to explore options and make recommendations, almost all of which were implemented.

Six years in, MDC is doubling down to solve difficult retention and completion problems. Acknowledging that "it is a long process to move the needle on student success," Mayer says the college can rightfully feel good about what it has accomplished so far. "We've changed what we do. We've changed the way we teach. And we've changed the way we advise students. It's what we do now."

“When we looked at how many students were leaving without the preparation they needed to support their families and lead productive lives, we knew we had to look inward at how we functioned. Everyone had to take ownership of the change that was needed.”

MDC president Eduardo Padrón.

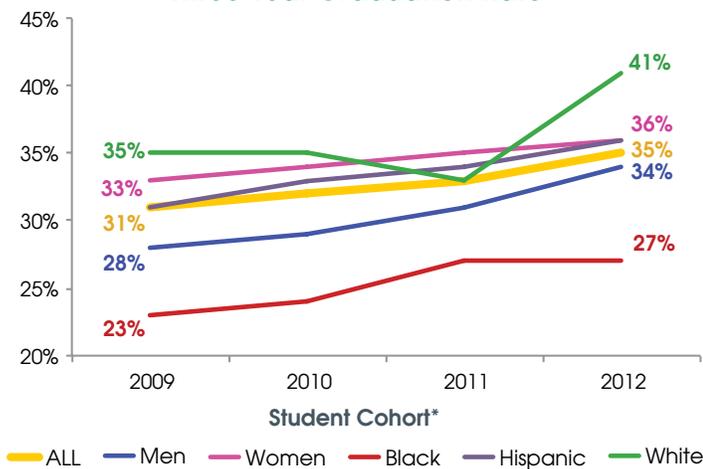
THE COLLEGE'S IMPRESSIVE RESULTS SPEAK FOR THEMSELVES:

The results described on this page take place against a backdrop of sweeping changes that began in 2007 when a new law exempted students who graduated from high school after 2007, essentially changing the way students entered the college and the first courses they took.

- Approximately 68 percent of first-time-in-college students who come directly from high school into the Shark Path now enroll in gateway mathematics in their first term—the most significant predictor of student performance and completion—compared with 49 percent in 2012.

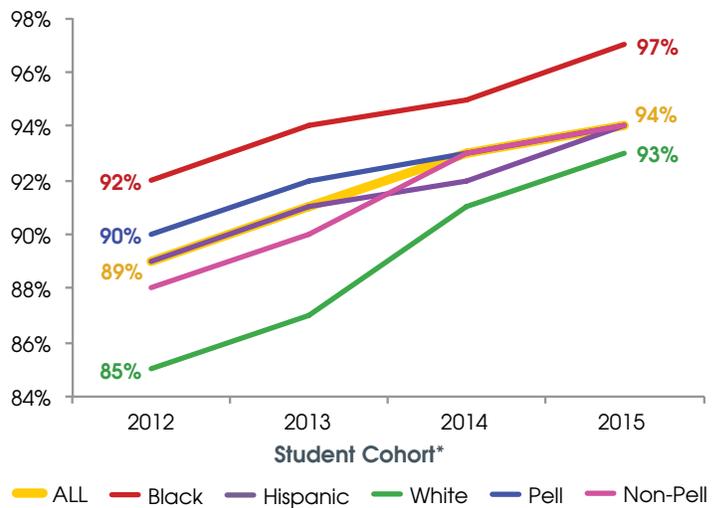
- The median fall-to-spring persistence rates of the 2011-2014 cohorts stood at 82 percent.
- Fall-to-fall persistence for returning (non-FTIC) students from fall 2011 to fall 2013 increased from 42 percent to 51 percent
- At the end of their fourth year, 26 percent of the fall 2011 cohort completed a degree and transferred to a four-year institution, 10 percent completed a degree, and 14 percent transferred to a four-year institution.

Three-Year Graduation Rate



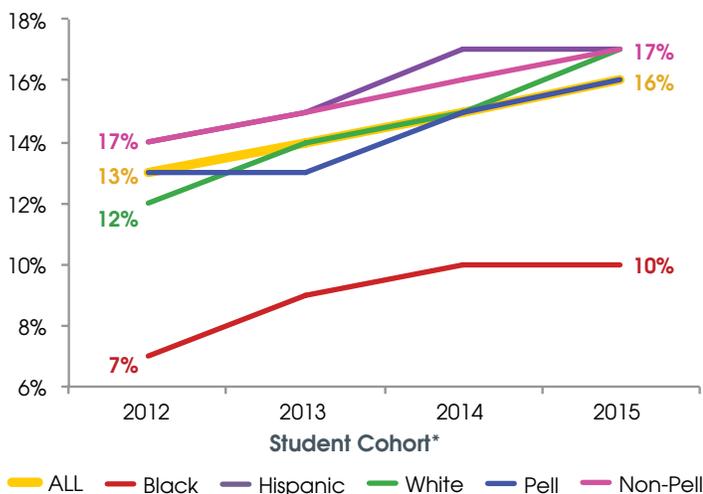
*Cohorts are first-time, full-time, degree/certificate-seeking students. Data Source: U.S. Department of Education, IPEDS Data Center.

Selected Program of Study by End of the First Term



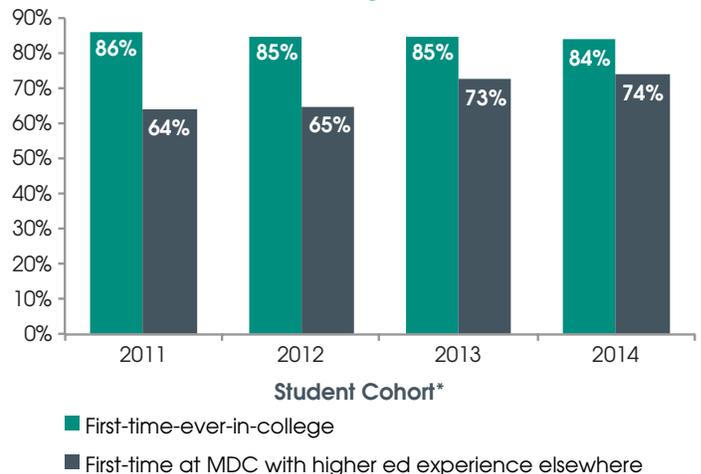
*Cohorts are first-time-in-college students who immediately enrolled after high school graduation.

Completed 30 or More Credits at End of First Spring



*Cohorts are first-time-in-college students who immediately enrolled after high school graduation.

Fall-to-Spring Retention



*Cohorts are first-time to MDC students in the fall, including part-time and full-time. Data Source: National Student Clearinghouse.



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ABOUT ACHIEVING THE DREAM

Achieving the Dream leads a national network of more than 200 community colleges dedicated to helping their students, particularly low-income students and students of color, achieve their goals for academic success, personal growth and economic opportunity. Achieving the Dream is working toward closing achievement gaps and accelerating student success through a change process that builds colleges' institutional capacities in seven critical areas. More than 100 coaches and advisors and 15 state policy teams are working throughout 35 states and the District of Columbia to help Achieving the Dream reach more than 4 million community college students

FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT ACHIEVING THE DREAM:

Visit www.AchievingtheDream.org

or contact us at info@AchievingtheDream.org or call (240) 450-0075