ALTERED STATE
HOW THE VIRGINIA COMMUNITY COLLEGE SYSTEM HAS USED ACHIEVING THE DREAM TO IMPROVE STUDENT SUCCESS

BY KAY MILLS
Achiving the Dream: Community Colleges Count is a national initiative to help more community college students succeed, particularly students of color and low-income students. The initiative works on multiple fronts—including efforts on campuses and in research, public engagement, and public policy—and emphasizes the use of data to drive change. Achieving the Dream was launched in 2004, with funding provided by Lumina Foundation for Education. Seven national partner organizations work with Lumina to guide the initiative and provide technical and other support to the colleges and states. For more information, please visit www.achievingthedream.org.

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Kay Mills is the author of five books, including This Little Light of Mine: The Life of Fannie Lou Hamer and Something Better for My Children: The History and People of Head Start. A former editorial writer for the Los Angeles Times, she writes frequently on higher education.

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ABSTRACT

The Virginia Community College System joined the Achieving the Dream student success initiative in 2004. This case study summarizes VCCS’s progress in Achieving the Dream and provides a powerful example of how one system has had the vision to leverage participation in this ambitious initiative to make student success a central focus across all the state’s community colleges.

By identifying strong leadership in the system office, building a stable state team, and engaging key decision makers, VCCS has built deep support for its student success policy agenda and has made significant progress in reorienting priorities and resources. VCCS substantially strengthened its systems for collecting and analyzing data and then used the increased capacity to spark sustained conversations with campus practitioners. VCCS has also adopted new policies to improve developmental education, enhance financial aid, and streamline the transfer to four-year institutions.

When VCCS first joined Achieving the Dream, the system office struggled to embrace the initiative. In the last five years, though, the initial hesitation turned into deep commitment and strategic action. In November 2009, the Virginia State Board for Community Colleges approved a strategic plan developed by VCCS calling for a 50 percent boost in the number of students graduating, transferring to four-year institutions, or completing a workforce credential. The VCCS office and the state’s community colleges are already deep into the work of data-informed decision making to meet the state’s ambitious new success goal.
IN JULY 2009, PRESIDENT BARACK OBAMA CALLED UPON THE NATION’S COMMUNITY COLLEGES TO
“FIGURE OUT WHAT’S KEEPING STUDENTS FROM CROSSING THAT FINISH LINE, PURSUE INNOVATIVE STRATEGIES THAT PROMOTE STUDENT COMPLETION, AND MAKE INFORMED CHOICES ABOUT WHICH PROGRAMS WORK.”¹ TO THOSE INVOLVED IN ACHIEVING THE DREAM: COMMUNITY COLLEGES COUNT, THE PRESIDENT’S CHALLENGE WAS A RINGING ENDORSEMENT OF THEIR MANY YEARS OF HARD WORK IN PURSUIT OF THE VERY GOALS HE OUTLINED.

STATES INTERESTED IN RISING TO THE PRESIDENT’S CHALLENGE CAN LOOK TO VIRGINIA’S EXPERIENCE WITH ACHIEVING THE DREAM FOR CONCRETE STRATEGIES ON HOW TO MOVE TOWARD DATA-DRIVEN STUDENT SUCCESS. THE VIRGINIA COMMUNITY COLLEGE SYSTEM (VCCS) JOINED THE ACHIEVING THE DREAM STATE-POLICY EFFORT IN 2004. THE MULTIYEAR NATIONAL INITIATIVE AIMS TO INFLUENCE STATE AND NATIONAL POLICY TO INCREASE THE SUCCESS OF COMMUNITY COLLEGE STUDENTS.

VCCS used the initiative as a means to increase the focus on student success—and not just at the campuses of the five schools originally selected to join the initiative but throughout its twenty-three colleges.² Its participation in Achieving the Dream prompted the system to collect and take a hard look at data about its students, and then to use data to spark new conversations and make better-informed decisions about helping students succeed in their studies. When VCCS readied an ambitious new strategic plan during 2009, it made increasing student success its centerpiece. But it took leadership to do that, and it was not entirely clear at the beginning of Achieving the Dream that the system was ready to embrace the initiative and use it as a lever for change.

LEADERSHIP COUNTS:
LEVERAGING ACHIEVING THE DREAM’S RESOURCES ACROSS THE SYSTEM

When Achieving the Dream started in Virginia, VCCS chancellor Glenn DuBois recognized the critical need for a high-level leader to champion the initiative. He hired Monty Sullivan as vice-chancellor for academic services and assigned him to oversee Virginia’s participation. But Sullivan was new in his job, and he had to concentrate on filling 14 staff vacancies. A year of staff transition hampered the system’s capacity to commit to this work.
“At first, VCCS’s process was slow,” said Michael Collins of Jobs for the Future, a nonprofit advocacy group that is a partner in the initiative. Attending a meeting early in Virginia’s participation, Collins said, he didn’t see that Virginia, which offered such promise to develop a successful program, was taking advantage of the resources offered by the initiative to meet the system’s student success goals. VCCS staff seemed to view Achieving the Dream as “just another project. They just didn’t know what they had.”

At that meeting, though, Sullivan had an “aha moment,” realizing that he needed to get more involved in what Achieving the Dream could produce. And he did, so much so that by 2009, according to John Dever, executive vice president of Northern Virginia Community College, Sullivan had put “the success of our students at the center of every meeting. He made us focus on indisputable data,” and asked how the system could use the trail of evidence that it was producing to improve the delivery of service?

VCCS began by building a core state team for Achieving the Dream. That core team has remained largely intact, doing the work in their home state and also serving as the main representatives at the initiative’s national meetings. DuBois and the VCCS staff reached out to key people to build their case. They talked about Achieving the Dream at meetings of the college presidents and those of the Academic and Student Affairs Council, the group of vice presidents that makes systemwide policy.

VCCS engaged a number of important decision makers as well, seeking to spread awareness and build support for a student success agenda. The chair of the State Board for Community Colleges and the board representative on the system’s strategic planning committee, Gary Hancock, attended Achieving the Dream meetings and took up the theme of student success. VCCS also invited Virginia

ACHIEVING THE DREAM
“IS AMONG THOSE THINGS THAT ARE MOVING THE BALL FORWARD IN IMPORTANT AND PRODUCTIVE WAYS FOR THE CITIZENS OF THE COMMONWEALTH.”
—TOM MORRIS, VIRGINIA SECRETARY OF EDUCATION
secretary of education Tom Morris to several Achieving the Dream meetings. At the 2009 chancellor’s retreat, Morris said Achieving the Dream “is among those things that are moving the ball forward in important and productive ways for the citizens of the Commonwealth.”

“I think the Virginia Community College System really needs a tip of the hat as a rare statewide network that acknowledged that it had issues it needed to face,” said Dan LaVista, executive director of the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia, which is responsible for systemwide strategic planning and policy development. He especially noted how the new VCCS strategic plan includes documented intentions around student success, which is at the heart of Achieving the Dream. LaVista observed that Glenn DuBois creates strategic plans that are more than just plans—he makes sure the system acts on them. “He uses them extensively with the presidents. His policies and the strategic plan regularly are using data that’s objective. It’s pretty hard to hide from that.”

Through these efforts, DuBois and Sullivan made it clear that student success was a central goal for the system. Presidential evaluations and budgets were linked to it. As Gretchen Schmidt, director of educational policy, said about the early days of Achieving the Dream in Virginia, “There was some resistance until everybody saw how we could use the data and saw how committed Glenn [DuBois] was.”

Virginia’s team next decided to leverage Achieving the Dream’s State Policy Framework, an overview of state policies that can help optimize student success (see box). By considering which policies they had in place compared with their peer states in the initiative, the team members began to prioritize which policies they might seek to change. The team went so far as to review the entire VCCS policy manual. According to Schmidt, the group combed the manual’s 75 pages one by one to find policies that might inhibit student success. For example, the group looked at grading policies to determine how they could become positive forces for success, “not the stick to punish students.”

### A FRAMEWORK FOR STATE POLICY

The Achieving the Dream State Policy Framework, developed collaboratively by Jobs for the Future and the states in the initiative, specifies five high-leverage policy areas for improving success among community college students: data and performance measurement systems; student success; K-12 and postsecondary alignment; transfer and articulation; and need-based financial aid. A self-assessment tool enables states to consider to what extent their policy-making environment is oriented toward student success.

For more information, see: www.achievingthedream.org/publicpolicy/framework/default.tp.
“We were looking at big-picture policy issues,” Sullivan said. Some of the staff had come from the colleges, and it took time before they looked at the issues in larger terms—how they affected everyone, not just one college. “That was our team chemistry exercise,” he added. “It took awhile, but it fundamentally changed how we think about policies.”

VCCS also used Achieving the Dream to aid the strategic planning process. Before it joined the initiative, VCCS already had a strategic plan, Dateline 2009. Its goals included serving more new students, improving retention and graduation, providing more noncredit job training, increasing transfers, boosting the number of high school students dually enrolled at community colleges, and doubling private support. The system exceeded its goals in several areas and narrowed the gap in others. But according to DuBois, he was disappointed about progress toward meeting one key goal: to rank in the top 10 percent of the nation’s community college systems in rates of student graduation, retention, and job placement.

Virginia’s three-year graduation rate, as indicated by the federal reporting system, was 16 percent. The three-year average graduation rate for VCCS’s peers was 18.9 percent. However, community college students often take more than three years to graduate, and some transfer without receiving an Associate’s degree—factors omitted as successful outcomes under the federal method. Taking these factors into account, the graduation rate at Virginia community colleges is 50 percent, Sullivan said—“Better, but still not there.”

Despite these figures—or perhaps because of them—DuBois feels the work under Achieving the Dream has helped his system focus squarely on student success in its next strategic plan. Previewed at the chancellor’s retreat in August 2009, the plan was approved by the State Board for Community Colleges in November with a strong commitment: Over the next five years, the system will boost by 50 percent the number of students graduating, transferring to four-year institutions, or completing a workforce credential. It also pledged to try to increase by 75...
percent the success of students from underserved populations, that is, minority, low-income, or first-generation college students. This part of the plan, said Sullivan, “has Achieving the Dream written all over it.”

The plan’s focus on student success is important, but DuBois also feels that Achieving the Dream has given his system something equally if not more important: a framework for using data to drive an agenda with student success as the goal. Dateline 2009 laid out a vision for the system, but the system was not ready to articulate how the colleges could meet the plan’s goals. Under the new strategic plan, VCCS plans to leverage the tools, resources, and networks of Achieving the Dream to embrace data-driven student success as a systemwide aspiration.

One of the most important outcomes of Achieving the Dream in Virginia has been “the way we talk about student success,” Schmidt said. “When you have board members talking about student success, it has permeated your culture. This is the great service we have done for our students—not that people weren’t concerned before, but Achieving the Dream changed the dialog around student success.” A critical part of this cultural shift is an emphasis on data-driven decision making.

MOVING TOWARD A DATA-DRIVEN SYSTEM

Achieving the Dream emphasizes using data to drive change, yet when Virginia entered the initiative its data system was in disarray. The schools were entering their data into the central system differently or incorrectly, so “you had five colleges [in the initiative] clamoring for help,” said Carlyle Ramsey, president of Danville Community College, one of the five. “We’re in this national demonstration project. Virginia is supposed to be one of the leaders, and we can’t even crunch our numbers. There hadn’t been enough coordination from the central office on data, making sure everyone was on the same page.”

The Achieving the Dream team attacked that issue, Ramsey added, so that now the entire system—and not just the colleges directly involved with Achieving the Dream—considers itself “data driven.” Talk to anyone associated with the program, and they’ll tell you it has brought a culture change.

“We always captured systemwide data, and we had a nice rich data system that we weren’t using,” said Donna Jovanovich, director of institutional effectiveness and a key figure in cleaning up Virginia’s data system. The VCCS central office homed in on the procedures for entering the data so that they became standardized across the system, developed data “marts” or warehouses to customize data for the colleges, and sought to better support the colleges.

More important, “The way we were looking at [data] has changed,” Jovanovich added. Previously, the system had used the data mainly for reports to the federal
government and to the State Council of Higher Education, the state's coordinating board. The system was not using data in strategic ways—for example, to conduct research that could inform institutional and state policy decisions.

"Now data are used for a purpose, and that purpose is to enhance our policy and practice discussions and identify areas where strengthening is needed," said Susan Wood, newly appointed vice chancellor and formerly assistant vice chancellor for institutional effectiveness. "We are not drawing on anecdotal evidence, gut instincts, or what we feel—we are relying on data. The expectation is that decisions are based on undeniable facts."

Systemwide and campus data previously had focused on graduation rates and retention from fall to fall. Community college practitioners considered the information somewhat misleading because the federal reporting system—the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System, or IPEDS—does not take into account the fact that a large proportion of community college students attend classes part time and therefore take longer to finish their coursework. Jovanovich became a core member of the Cross-State Data Work Group, a collaborative effort of six Achieving the Dream states (see box). The work group has developed a set of indicators that states can use to track student performance, evaluate the effectiveness of interventions, and learn from the strengths of other community college systems. Virginia refined its data through the efforts of the work group, Schmidt added. "Now there are numbers that can help change planning."

For example, since June 2008 VCCS has issued regular “Student Success Snapshots” on subjects ranging from defining student success at its colleges to the impact college-skills courses have on student success. These are two-page documents: the first page outlines the topic and shows system-wide results; the second page gives college-by-college results. College presidents receive the snapshots at their bimonthly meetings with Chancellor DuBois.

THE CROSS-STATE DATA WORK GROUP

The purpose of the six-state Cross-State Data Work Group of Achieving the Dream participants—Connecticut, Florida, North Carolina, Ohio, Texas, and Virginia—is to develop and test alternative measures of student success, including intermediate benchmarks that provide an indication of whether or not students are on track for a successful outcome. The Work Group has refined the system of measuring student progress by including part-time students, as federal measurements do not; expanding the time limit from the federal method's three years to six years; and including students who transferred to a four-year school without receiving a community college degree.

Before the snapshots were issued, the presidents “would talk about buildings and budgets—resources,” Sullivan recalled. “We had to find a way to change the conversation.” At an Achieving the Dream cross-state meeting, Sullivan heard a report from Florida on using this technique. Inspired by his peers’ innovative idea—a regular occurrence at Achieving the Dream meetings—he decided to steal it. “Now it’s a key area of concern to the presidents,” Sullivan said.

“You can see them when they get the snapshots,” Schmidt added. “They look at where they are on the list and then their eyes go to comparable schools.”

“The snapshots are a useful tool to get the attention of 23 college presidents,” Chancellor DuBois said. “It’s using empirical evidence as a way to be convincing.” The data often reveal painful realities about low rates of student success that most in higher education would prefer to ignore, but Achieving the Dream has created a climate that encourages both states and institutions to have what some in the initiative refer to as “courageous conversations.”

“Although these snapshots have some troubling information,” DuBois said, “we find them terribly useful.”

“The first thing I look at is where we are,” Danville’s President Ramsey said. “I expect our college to be in the top three or five” on items like retention and graduation, and it is. When he returns to his campus, he and his staff and his management team talk about the snapshot topics. “The conversations are much more specific than they were before.”

**CHANGING KEY POLICIES**

Early in the initiative, Achieving the Dream states identified developmental education—designed to improve students’ competency in math and English before they enroll in credit-bearing courses—as a main focus. The work of the Cross State Data Work Group and research by the Community College Research Center (CCRC) at Teachers College, Columbia University confirmed that low completion rates in developmental education are a major barrier to student success. VCCS made developmental education a priority for the Achieving the Dream work, and in 2008 it created a task force to examine the issue. As result of collecting data in a more refined way, DuBois said, “We now know things that we did not know and those things are now policy levers. You are going to see the [State Board for Community Colleges] develop systemwide policy changes focusing on at-risk students.”

Slightly more than half of all first-time students at Virginia community colleges must take a developmental course during their first fall on campus. Of those taking at least one of these courses, 69 percent enrolled in developmental mathematics and 59 percent in developmental English. “We will not improve our graduation rates unless we improve success in developmental courses,” Sullivan said. “There is now a laser focus on developmental education” in the system.
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DEVELOPMENTAL AND GATEKEEPER COURSE SUCCESS

John Dever of Northern Virginia Community College chaired the VCCS developmental education task force. Too often, he said, these courses repeat material students supposedly learned in high school. That means the colleges need to work more closely with high schools to ensure that students are truly prepared and more closely with students so that they “are not losing sight of their real goals—that it’s not just about getting through these courses.” Too often, he said, “We are confronting students with a series of requirements rather than doing case management.” The task-force report, released in September 2009, outlined various strategies that campuses have tried. VCCS will next seek to support colleges implementing successful strategies.

“You can set goals, but you need to leave the strategies to the campus because they are all different. If we try to overprescribe the strategy,” Dever added, “we will take away the faculty’s initiative.”

One strategy employed at several colleges resulted from awareness that some students complete their high school graduation requirements in math in either grade 10 or 11. Therefore, they take math a year or more before taking placement tests. Other students are returning to campuses after years in the workforce. Several colleges, including Danville, have offered math refresher courses to better address these students’ academic needs. For example, seventeen students enrolled in Danville’s pilot program in summer 2009, taking four hours of instruction for four nights, with a test of their learning on the last night.

Also, students may grasp some math concepts but not others, so VCCS is supporting innovations aimed at shortening the time it takes for a developmental education student to be ready for credit-bearing courses. A variable credit structure gives campuses flexibility to develop modules for the math classes. Thus, Math 2 has five segments, explained Ed White, dean of the Division of Business and Engineering Technologies at Danville. “It may be that a student can do three of them,” and the school is breaking down the course so they must take the parts they do not understand. White is also asking his faculty to identify the basic skills a student needs in order to complete a course so that they only have to take that part of the developmental math module.

VCCS asked the Community College Research Center (CCRC) to conduct a study of the factors associated with enrollment in and passage of developmental and college-level math and English. The study found significant differences in enrollment and passage rates both within and across Virginia’s community colleges. VCCS is using CCRC’s findings to inform policy priorities as it implements the system’s new strategic plan.

For the study’s full findings and recommendations, see Davis Jenkins, Shanna Smith Jaggars, and Josipa Roksa, Promoting Gatekeeper Course Success Among Community College Students Needing Remediation http://ccrc.tc.columbia.edu/Publication.asp?UID=714.
Looking at their data, the colleges have also found that students who register late for developmental courses are in danger of failing them. “We know that of students who register late, 99 percent of them are going to have trouble,” said Carolyn Byrd, dean of instructional support services and campus Achieving the Dream leader at Patrick Henry Community College. “There had been a two-week window in which they could register, but now it’s only a week and only if the faculty member agrees.” The colleges need to dig further into the data to learn who is registering late and why, but already some colleges are considering not letting any students register late for development education courses.

Another system-level task force, this one focusing on student success courses, completed its work in late 2009, informed in part by data compiled for the April 2009 Student Success Snapshot. That snapshot revealed “significantly higher persistence rates”—that is, students remaining enrolled—for people who took the college-skills course in their first term than for all students: 81 percent of first-time college students who took a skills course persisted to the spring term, compared to 68 percent of all first-time college students. These higher persistence rates for students taking skills courses held true when the information was broken down by gender, race and ethnicity, age, full-time/part-time, and financial-aid status.

The task force recommended that future college-skills courses include career development, information literacy, college policies and services, study skills (e.g., note and test taking), time management, and financial literacy. It suggested that every college develop a plan to increase the percentage of students enrolling in these courses over the next six years. In addition, the system office has recommended that students enrolled in any developmental courses must take the college-skills course during their first semester. More than one panelist at the 2009 chancellor’s retreat said that community colleges need to start mandating things that they know work, such as these college-skills courses, because “students don’t do optional.”

The members of the VCCS team knew that once they had improved their data system they could also tell the story of why community college students transferring to four-year institutions would need financial help. “We were developing articulation agreements [with four-year schools] one a month,” Sullivan said, but “we also had to think about the financial component. How do you take students from first-generation, low-income families onto a clear pathway to graduation?”

After weeks of wading through their data, the team members assembled the numbers so that legislators could determine how many students would be involved, their level of need, and the cost of an aid program. In 2007, the legislature passed legislation giving transfer students grants for three years to help them complete Bachelor’s degrees.

“We could not have done that in the beginning,” Sullivan said. “I think we have demonstrated if we can get the numbers together, we have a compelling case to tell.”
EVIDENCE OF A MORE SUCCESS-FOCUSED POLICY ENVIRONMENT

Each year, states participating in Achieving the Dream have completed a self-assessment based on the State Policy Framework (see text box on page 6). This assessment gauges a state’s progress on the road to creating an optimal policy environment for student success. Over the course of the initiative, Virginia has made great strides in the elevation of student success as a state priority and the implementation of supportive enabling policies. In 2004, only 46 percent of the key policies identified by Achieving the Dream states were in place or under consideration in Virginia. By 2009, 75 percent of these policies had been adopted or were under consideration. The Virginia Community College System has made significant progress in turning its commitment to student success into policies that make a difference to institutions and students. More important, that commitment has become part of the system’s DNA, as evidenced by the success goals specified in its latest strategic plan.

For more information about the ATD state policy self-assessment go to: http://www.achievingthedream.org/publicpolicy/framework/default.tp

LESSONS LEARNED:
HOW VIRGINIA CHANGED THE CONVERSATION AROUND STUDENT SUCCESS

Through Achieving the Dream, the Virginia Community College System has bolstered its data capabilities, changed the conversation in the state to focus more on student success, created a climate for experimentation on campuses, and won legislative approval for increasing financial aid for community college students transferring to four-year institutions. VCCS has faced its share of challenges along the way, but five years down the line, Virginia is a success story. Others can benefit from the lessons the VCCS staff and on-campus leaders have learned:

> **Provide committed leadership from the top.** Chancellor DuBois made his commitment to the initiative clear, and the designation of Sullivan, a high-level leader in the system, to run the initiative for Virginia helped provide solid leadership on a day-to-day basis.

> **Have usable, uniform data that is appropriate for community college students.** Through hard work at home, aided by participation in the national Cross State Data Work Group, Virginia boosted its ability to collect, analyze, and use sophisticated data, and to support community colleges in doing the same.

> **Use what you learn from your data and your experiences to drive strategic planning and budgeting, at both the campus and system levels.** For example, the task forces looking in detail at college-success courses and developmental education are producing reports that will inform planning for several years.
Build a state team that has the depth to weather personnel changes and the breadth to reach necessary constituents, such as political figures, K-12 representatives, and members of the State Community College Board. Sullivan moved to the Louisiana community college system in 2009. His loss was deeply felt, but the stability of the state team since the first year of the initiative has helped Virginia to institutionalize the work of Achieving the Dream and to ensure that it continues.

Treat Achieving the Dream as something for all the community colleges in the state, not just those participating in the initiative. For example, VCCS creates Student Success Snapshots for all 23 colleges. Leaders from all the schools also hear the same message at the chancellor’s annual retreats.

Seek and secure public and political support for new programs. Virginia’s Achieving the Dream team purposefully reached out to the community college board, the governor, and legislators to build awareness of the initiative and win support for specific policy changes.

Use regular communications and convenings with college representatives to reinforce the importance of work to improve student success. For example, Sullivan visited each of the system’s 23 colleges during his first year on the job; student success was a key topic during those visits.

Create an environment that supports and encourages experimentation. “Achieving the Dream has liberated us to take risks,” said Janet Laughlin, dean of Danville Community College’s Division of Student Success and Academic Advancement and the initiative’s lead on her campus. “If you try something that doesn’t work, try something else,” she said.

Take advantage of meeting Achieving the Dream participants in other states. As Sullivan said, he never came away from the initiative’s state-policy meetings without picking up a good idea.

LOOKING AHEAD

The Virginia Community College System has changed the conversation in its state, putting student success at the center of all it does. Important policy changes have stemmed from those changed conversations. Yet student completion rates remain far too low, and “Achieving the Dream will at some point dissipate,” noted Sullivan. “We are seeking a way to sustain the movement. We don’t develop a strategic plan to have it sit on the shelf.”

Virginia’s success with Achieving the Dream has opened up other opportunities. In 2009, Virginia was one of six states selected to participate in the Developmental Education Initiative, funded by Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and Lumina Foundation for Education. Through this initiative, Virginia will continue to identify and implement policies that have the greatest potential to increase success rates for community college students who test into developmental education. As a result of its enhanced data capacity, VCCS will be able to utilize and share much more sophisticated analyses and information with policymakers and practitioners in an effort to improve the success of underprepared students.

Since 2005, “it’s been a climb,” according to Sullivan. There have been challenges along the way, but the system has removed barriers and cleared a path “so we get to the heart of what really matters: student success.”

“It’s about the organization seeing the big picture,” Sullivan added. “We could have put all these policy changes in place from the top, but we would have failed miserably. Policy change is about organizational change. The group has to make the climb together.”
ENDNOTES


2 The five original Achieving the Dream community colleges in Virginia are Danville, Mountain Empire in Big Stone Gap, Patrick Henry in Martinsville, Paul D. Camp in Franklin, and Tidewater in Norfolk. Northern Virginia, based in Annandale, joined in 2007.

3 For more information on the framework and to download a copy of the self-assessment tool, see: www.achievingthedream.org/publicpolicy/framework/default.tp.

4 See: www.vccs.edu for information on its strategic planning process.

5 For examples of the Student Success Snapshots, see: www.vccs.edu/Academics/StudentSuccess/tabid/622/default.aspx.