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This newsletter is published by Jobs for the Future for Achieving the Dream: Community Colleges Count, a national initiative to help more community college students succeed (earn degrees, earn certificates, or transfer to other institutions to continue their studies). The initiative is particularly concerned about student groups that have faced the most significant barriers to success, including low-income students and students of color.

See www.achievingthedream.org for more on the initiative and www.jff.org for more on Jobs for the Future.



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In this Issue

This issue features an interview with Nancy Shulock, of the Institute for Higher Education Leadership & Policy at California State University, Sacramento. She talks about her recent publication, *Rules of the Game: How State Policy Creates Barriers to Degree Completion and Impedes Student Success in the California Community Colleges*—a powerful and provocative study on how policies designed to encourage access to community college education can unintentionally create barriers to student success—and how these consequences might be reversed.

Also in this issue, you will find:

- A summary of this year's top policy priorities for the nine Achieving the Dream states;

- An update on trends with regard to legislative activity around the nation on whether undocumented students should pay in-state tuition.
- Our usual updates from Achieving the Dream states—policy activities, convenings, publications; and
- Reports and other resources that we think you will find useful.

As always, we would like you to help us expand the readership of *Achieving Success*. Send emails of potential (free) subscribers to our editor, Radha Roy Biswas, rrbiswas@jff.org.

Thank you.

ACHIEVING THE DREAM STATES

Setting 2007 Priorities

Each year, the Achieving the Dream states refine and commit to policy priorities that align with the initiative's commitment to promoting student success. A "topline" summary of this year's priorities for each state is now available. As in the past, the priorities cluster in a few areas:

- Alignment with both K-12 and higher education systems, particularly around college readiness definition and transfer to four-year institutions; and
 - Expansion of need-based aid, in absolute terms and in relation to merit-based aid.
- This year, there is a noticeable increase in careful analytical work as a precursor to developing policy prescriptions in a number of areas related to student success. College-readiness and alignment of K-12 and community college expectations—and the role of community colleges in shaping and

- State community college data systems, their linkage with other data systems, and state use of data to pinpoint areas where policy change might be needed;
- Developmental education testing, placement, and results;

influencing state policy development and implementation—have also risen as a common area of focus across the states. Another area that is emerging as a policy target is the relationship between adult education and community college

programming (both developmental and college-level).

For a copy of this summary of the states' priorities, go to: www.achievingthedream.org/publicpolicy/default.tp

INTERVIEW

Challenging California Policymakers to Focus on Student Success



Dr. Nancy Shulock, Executive Director, Institute for Higher Education Leadership & Policy, and Associate Professor of Public Policy and Administration at California State University, Sacramento, has created a stir with a new publication: *Rules of the Game: How State Policy Creates Barriers to Degree Completion and Impedes Student Success in the California Community Colleges*. In California, nearly 75 percent of all students in public higher education are enrolled in its community colleges.

Historically, the state has placed great emphasis on access for low-income and traditionally underserved students. Tuition and fees are among the lowest in the nation. Dr. Shulock argues that the access-focused policy environment needs to be reassessed from the perspective of student success, so that unintended consequences and barriers to student success can be lowered or eliminated. Her study identifies five policy areas—four involve financing, and a fifth highlights institutional policies around advisement, guidance, assessment, and placements. She suggests how California can redesign some very specific state policies to encourage greater attention to student success.

We recently caught up to Dr. Shulock in her Sacramento office. She explained the origins and central findings of her report—and discussed the implications for policymakers in California, and also in other states trying to support institutional efforts to improve persistence, graduation, and success.

The report can be downloaded at: www.csus.edu/ihe/PDFs/Rules%20of%20the%20Game%20FINAL.pdf

Why did you decide to address policies affecting completion and success?

I am a professor of public policy and administration. I also run a public policy research institute. At the Institute for Higher Education Leadership & Policy, our mission and focus is the improvement of higher education in California. We have focused first on community colleges because these institutions are so important, yet they receive so little consideration from policymakers. In California, community colleges were designed to be the bridge to college education. But even though 75 percent of California students enter postsecondary education through community colleges (compared to 40 percent in other states), there is serious underinvestment in this sector.

We undertook this study because of a growing concern about projections of declining competitiveness of both the United States and California. Within the U.S., California's competitiveness is slipping. According to a report from the National Center for Higher Education Management Systems (NCHEMS), per capita income in the state is declining and will drop below the national average in the next four to five years unless we can increase productivity. For this, we need to get more students earning degrees and credentials. Any turnaround will require significant improvements in the performance of the state's community colleges.

Of the 60 percent of California community college students who are seeking a degree or certificate, only about one in four succeeds in transferring to a four-year institution or earning a credential—either a degree or

“We realized that what we had done was define community colleges around access, but we had inadvertently erected barriers to success.”

—Nancy Shulock

certificate—in six years. There seems to be a blind spot in the state regarding completion and success: it is assumed that if you talk about student success, you’re going to start to choke off access. And in California, access has long been the primary policy goal. While there is a growing trend in some other states toward greater attention to completion and success, as evidenced in initiatives such as Achieving the Dream, here in California the policy emphasis on access above all else has led to policies that, in effect, promote a student’s right to fail.

In recent years, with support from the Hewlett and Irvine foundations, we have conducted studies on community college policies. We focused on finance policies initially, in a study titled *Ensuring Access with Quality*, published by the National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education. With help from NCHEMS, we conducted an audit of financing policies, looking at the incentives that were built into financing policies. Another study, following a student cohort over six years, analyzed enrollment patterns and academic progress. This analysis pointed to the seriousness of the problem of low completions.

We pulled these strands of research together into an analysis that looked at how state policies that have focused on removing barriers to *access* have unintentionally erected barriers to *completion*. The report looks deeply into financing policies, and also into policies that shape the ability of institutions to give students the instruction and support they need—state policies for institutional services like assessments, placements, and advising and guidance. We realized that what we had done was define community colleges around access, but we had inadvertently erected barriers to success.

You argue that the “rules of the game” inhibit success? What do you mean?

We refer to policies as the “rules of the game,” rules that have been developed incrementally over decades, usually in response to reasonable concerns. But well-meaning policies can have unintended consequences. As schools follow the rules in order to survive financially, legally, and politically, and as students respond to the incentives

that the rules create, the result for California is low completion rates.

For example, in California, we have a history of defining affordability solely around fees and fee waivers. Fees make up only 5 to 7 percent of college-going costs, among the lowest in the nation, in keeping with the state’s access priority. Needy students can readily get their fees waived, and about 29 percent of students do so, accounting for a full 42 percent of units taken. Colleges receive state funds to replace revenue lost from waived fees. Therefore, fee waivers can enhance college revenues by increasing enrollment (and the associated state funding) without reducing fee revenue. There are some negative consequences, though. Colleges are prohibited from charging any other fees that are common elsewhere (such as late drop/add fees or fees for repeating courses multiple times). The low fees and the lack of connection between fees charged and revenues available removes any incentive for colleges to support fee increases. And colleges are left with below-average revenues. Four-year public institutions have some institutional aid to fill student unmet need, but this does not exist in our community colleges. The fee waiver is the only recourse to help students—but fees are so low that this is hardly good use of state aid. California students end up with more unmet need after financial aid than community college students nationally.

Here’s another example: We have been asking the vice presidents of colleges how they would improve completions and help students. Their response? We would mandate orientation for new students. The data show that it is needed and that it works. But faculty resist this change. Orientation requirements are viewed as a barrier, even though the lack of mandatory orientation and guidance has created its own barrier of “no guidance” and contributes directly to low completion and success rates. Students end up taking courses they are not prepared for and failing, yet California regulations discourage us from using assessments to place students in courses.

“Changing policies around guidance and support is within the reach of most states and institutions.”

—Nancy Shulock

What are the most important policy priorities for California?

That’s a tough question. I can’t answer it without thinking about political feasibility. I would look at what colleges can do—and at regulatory barriers that can be changed.

We identify five key barriers: enrollment-based funding; overregulation of how colleges should spend their resources (for example, rules about the percentage that must be spent on direct classroom instruction); restrictions on hiring; student fee and aid policies; and policies on student course-taking choices (such as the lack of mandates regarding placement into developmental courses).

If I were to answer your question based on feasibility for implementation, I would say that changing the financial system is very hard. But changing policies around guidance and support is within the reach of most states and institutions.

Take the policy on placement into developmental education. We have no standardized policy. As a result, lots of students do not get assessed. If they do get assessed, placement recommendations are purely advisory. Every college has its own assessment instruments and many use multiple measures. There is great need for standardization: mandatory assessment; standardized assessment instruments; mandatory placement; and course prerequisites.

But this is very difficult. The statutes of our Board of Governors, for example, prohibit colleges from setting blanket course prerequisites. They have to show statistically from past patterns that the prerequisites are valid and students can’t succeed in one unless they have taken another. Since few colleges have the capacity to do this analysis, there are few prerequisites set in our system.

Can you give examples of what you consider overregulation that undercuts efforts to support student success?

In the last 20 years, the focus on inputs has become a discredited tenet in public administration. The question has become: What do you accomplish with your funds? And what flexibility in how you spend resources do you need to meet your goals?

But the rules and regulations in higher education around the use of funds are still very tight. Interests resisting this kind of priority and policy shift are strong; inflexibilities still stand in the way—even when accountability and performance expectations are on the rise.

Why should we think that a statewide rule on how to spend resources is likely to be effective across 109 institutions in this huge state? For example, over the years, there has been stricter enforcement of 75-25 rule—the requirement that 75 percent of faculty be full time. Yet research shows that students benefit as much from support services as from full-time faculty. Moreover, different colleges have different student populations: many have substantial numbers of students who are in technical occupational training and need instruction that may not require full-time faculty but can be done by employers and adjunct instructors. There are good intentions in the origins of many of these policies, but arbitrary rules across the system tie the hands of institutional leaders.

Here’s another one: not enough adult education classes are offered in many colleges because there aren’t enough instructors for ABE courses. We may need a new class of institutions that could meet the backlog of ABE needs. But the 75-25 rule gets in the way: too much attention on how to spend the money, but not enough attention on what you get for the money.

Which lessons from your work do think can be applied in other states?

California community college policy is behind that of many states in that it still reflects an institutional philosophy that can be described as the “students’ right to fail,” manifested in the reluctance to impose requirements on students even when research and professional opinion support such requirements as supportive of student success. California might be farther to one side on this spectrum, but all states should be looking at their policies from the perspective of how to help institutions meet the responsibility they have to help students succeed.

One of the most important aspects of our work that is transferable is the method and the importance of distinguishing between

degree seekers and non-degree seekers. Most data systems do not allow for separate analysis of outcomes for degree seekers. But it is very important to know who they are and how they do. We identified about 60 percent of California students as degree seekers. By analyzing outcomes for this group, we could see how low their completion rates were. This is important and useful for any college, system, and state.

Another important finding reinforces the correlation between full-time and part-time attendance and completion. Community colleges have justifiably celebrated providing

education for anybody at any time. But the data show that if you can go early (as soon as after high school) and continuously (full time), your chances of completion improve. We need to find incentives to encourage people to go early and go full time.

The refrain that you hear from community colleges is that “We’re not Stanford. We are doing the best we can, given whom we serve and given our resources and policies.” I am not ready to say that, until we change the policies and get them right. Then we can judge whether we are doing as well as we can or should.

Support for undocumented students tends to come from constituents of state higher education systems and from immigrant advocacy groups, especially Latino advocacy groups.

UPDATE

States Tackle Policy on Tuition for Undocumented Students

In January 2005, Jobs for the Future published a policy brief, *Access to Community College for Undocumented Students: A Guide for State Policymakers*.

We reported on trends and developments in Achieving the Dream states around tuition and financial aid for undocumented students. Between 2001 and 2004, about twenty states had introduced bills designed to provide lower in-state tuition to undocumented immigrant students; seven states had passed legislation awarding in-state tuition to these students. At the same time, a backlash against this approach was beginning to emerge, mostly through lawsuits, in a number of states.

This year, new activity on this issue has taken place in a number of legislatures. One Achieving the Dream state, where a new bill to grant in-state tuition has been introduced, asked JFF to update our report and assess the current state of play across the country. Here is what we found:

More legislatures are moving toward in-state tuition for undocumented students than are moving against it. The number of states that have introduced legislation to provide in-state tuition has risen to thirty; in 2007, the number of states that had passed legislation climbed to ten. Six states—Alaska, Arizona,

Colorado, North Carolina, Utah, and Virginia—have tried to pass legislation that would ban undocumented immigrants from receiving in-state tuition.

States are generally following one of two models used by early-adopting states to determine eligibility for in-state tuition: they are either exempting students from paying at non-resident tuition rates or redefining residency for the purposes of tuition. In the first model, states have created categories of students with special status—this includes undocumented students—who are exempted from paying non-resident tuition rates. In the second, the legislation redefines state residency for the purposes of tuition and fees, on the basis of high school attendance and other criteria, so that certain students, including those who are undocumented, can qualify as residents and pay in-state tuition rates.

Support tends to come from constituents of state higher education systems and from immigrant advocacy groups, especially Latino advocacy groups. However, public opinion tends to be hostile to undocumented immigrants.

Two high-profile lawsuits—in Kansas and New York—that challenged supportive legislation have been defeated. At the same time, in Texas, the first state to pass legislation allowing undocumented students to pay in-state tuition, four bills were introduced in the 2007 legislative session to limit or reverse this policy. Observers note that Texas Governor Rick Perry, who signed the original bill (HB 1403) into law, will likely veto the bills if they pass the legislature.

The 2007 update is available for on the Achieving the Dream Web site at: www.achievingthedream.org/_pdfs/_publicpolicy/UndocImmigUpdate_0307.pdf.

The original report is available at: www.achievingthedream.org/dataresearch/publicationsandpresentation/default.tp.

Recent press and reports include:

“In Maryland, Lawmakers Revisiting Immigration.” *Baltimore Sun*. February 25, 2007. www.baltimoresun.com/news/local/politics/bal-te.md/immigrants25feb25,0,4342951.story.

Robinson, Jennifer. 2007. *In-State Tuition for Undocumented Students in Utah*. Salt Lake City: Center for Public Policy and Administration, University of Utah, Policy Brief. www.cppa.utah.edu/publications/higher_ed/Policy_Brief_2_13_07_In-state_Tuition.pdf.

Tomkins, Alan, et al. 2006. “Rural Poll Reflects Reservations About Latino Immigration to Nebraska.” Lincoln: University of Nebraska, Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources. <http://ianrnews.unl.edu/static/0611130.shtml>.

Achieving the Dream has led the Connecticut system office to look at the characteristics of students who receive financial aid.

STATE POLICY DEVELOPMENTS

What’s New in Achieving the Dream States

CONNECTICUT

Connecticut at the midpoint in its current legislative session: Legislation to watch includes: a bill to establish a P-16 Council in the state; a boost to state financial aid that will raise the grant and extend it to another 5,000 students; and legislation to extend in-state tuition to undocumented students in the state’s colleges and universities. The Department of Higher Education has introduced legislation to move the state toward a system of common cut scores for placement into developmental education, although the end result is likely to be a bill that establishes a process for addressing this issue during the coming year. Some of the impetus for this legislation came from the attention the issue of cut scores received at the recent Achieving the Dream state policy meeting.

Connecticut Community College System office to study factors affecting student success: The Connecticut Community College System office will conduct a study of factors affecting the success of its students, including financial aid, using data to track a cohort of

students from 2000. The system’s research office has done preliminary background work for the study, including a literature review on factors affecting student success, and it has identified the factors it wants to track. The study will get underway in April. The motivation for the study comes from Connecticut’s participation in Achieving the Dream, which has led the system office to look at the characteristics of students who receive financial aid. The coming study is the next step in attempting to better understand the needs of students who receive financial aid and the role of financial aid, among other factors, in determining student access and success.

FLORIDA

Task Force convenes to look at high school/post-secondary alignment: The state has created a “Go Higher” Task Force, comprised primarily of community college presidents and K-12 superintendents, to look at how to strengthen K-12/postsecondary alignment. The task force, which met for the first time in January 2007, will identify and propose

The New Mexico legislature appropriated \$48 million for College Affordability Grants this year, bringing the total two-year investment to \$97 million.

strategies to eliminate barriers that hinder the successful transition from secondary to postsecondary education in Florida. The Task Force will build upon Florida's educational gains of the past eight years and the state's strong history of articulation. Task Force members include nine community college presidents, including the presidents of the four Achieving the Dream colleges.

For more information, go to:
www.fldoe.org/cc/gohigher.

Connections conference on college success strategies set for May 16-18:

The Division of Community Colleges and Workforce Education will host its second Achieving the Dream-sponsored conference *Connections*, May 16-18 in Ft Lauderdale. The conferences enable college administrators and faculty to share and promote effective strategies for serving underserved populations. This year's theme is "Taking Your Success Strategies to the Next Level." Sessions include a panel of Achieving the Dream college grant administrators, who will discuss implementation and preliminary results; a panel of Achieving the Dream success coaches, who will discuss hands-on work with students and anecdotal evidence on how it has affected students; and a panel of students, who will discuss the importance of their participation in Achieving the Dream programs. Other sessions include a workshop on using results from the Community College Survey of Student Engagement to change institutional policy and a workshop on using data to guide decision-making.

For more information, go to:
www.fldoe.org/cc/connections.

NEW MEXICO

College Affordability Act funded and amended: The College Affordability Grant, created through the College Affordability Act in 2005, is New Mexico's need-based aid program for low-income students, complementing the merit-based Lottery Success Scholarship. Grants cover attendance expenses, including tuition, books, and fees. During the 2007 legislative session, four bills expanded the College Affordability Grant to students at tribal colleges. New legislation is favorable to part-time students: there is no longer an

eight-semester limit to receiving these grants. In addition, bill language was modified so that the New Mexico Higher Education Department can distribute \$2 million of the investment income to students immediately. This enables the NMHED to serve 1,500 students per year. The appropriations bill allocates \$48 million (instead of the proposed \$50 million), bringing the total investment fund from the past two years to \$97 million.

Secretary of Higher Education Department confirmed:

Secretary Beverlee J. McClure was confirmed by the state legislature this past session. McClure, former president of Clovis Community College, has been acting secretary since her confirmation was shelved during the 2006 session.

NMHED memoranda of agreement with tribal colleges:

In February, New Mexico became the first state to create partnerships for higher education with state tribal colleges. NMHED Secretary Dr. Beverlee J. McClure signed memoranda with leaders of each of the four tribal colleges: Diné College; the Institute of American Indian Arts; Navajo Technical College; and Southwestern Indian Polytechnic Institute. The memoranda formalize working relationships between NMHED and tribal colleges; provide a forum for effective communication and the development of strategies that advocate policy changes to improve the accessibility, retention, and education opportunities in New Mexico postsecondary institutions and tribal colleges; and strengthen relations among tribal colleges, their corresponding sovereign nations, and the State of New Mexico in supporting efforts to increase tribal student success in higher education.

The memoranda were developed to address issues identified in *The Path of Many Journeys*, prepared by the Institute for Higher Education Policy in collaboration with the American Indian Higher Education Consortium and the American Indian College Fund.

To download *The Path of Many Journeys*, go to:
www.ihep.org/organizations.php3?action=printContentItem&orgid=104&typeID=906&itemID=20344.

North Carolina's new financial aid program will combine a two-year state grant with current federal assistance and replace the need for loans if students work 10 hours a week to help pay for their education.

Moving forward on alignment: For three years, state educators, legislators, and representatives of statewide organizations who make up the New Mexico Higher Education Department/New Mexico Public Education Department Alignment Task Force have been working to align high school competencies with college readiness requirements at state public institutions, as stipulated in a 2003 statute (NMSA 1978 22-13-1.2). The task force has addressed three issues: New Mexico high school assessments; dual credit agreements; and the creation of an English and math placement-test, cut-score matrix. The objective for this matrix is to facilitate the decisions of high school students regarding their postsecondary education by publishing these scores online. In addition, the New Mexico Legislative Education Study Committee is leading the state's participation in Achieve, Inc.'s Alignment Institute, which helps select American Diploma Project states to develop alignment policies that are congruent with and adhere to national practice.

NORTH CAROLINA

Governor announces two ambitious plans for state education: In his state of the state speech in February, North Carolina Governor Mike Easley announced two ambitious high school reform and college graduation initiatives. The first was the statewide expansion of Learn and Earn high schools; a variant of early college high schools, these allow high school students to take college courses at high school and earn two years of college credit or an Associate's degree with just one extra year of study. The state currently sponsors 33 new Learn and Earn small schools in North Carolina through the North Carolina New Schools Project. Each is a partnership between a school district and a local college or university. The North Carolina schools are part of a national movement of 129 early college high schools across the country.

*For more information, go to:
www.earlycolleges.org or
www.newschoolsproject.org/early.html.*

The governor also announced a new financial aid program for low- and moderate-income students. The program will combine a two-year state grant with current

federal assistance and replace the need for loans if students work 10 hours a week to help pay for their education. Under Governor Easley's new plan, students who complete the Learn and Earn program with two years of college credit will be able to finish their four-year degree at a state university debt free.

Education Cabinet takes a look at Achieving the Dream brief on financial aid uptake: North Carolina Community College System President Martin Lancaster presented copies of the Achieving the Dream policy brief, *Money on the Table: State Initiatives to Improve Financial Aid Participation*, to members of the Governor's Education Cabinet in February. The Education Cabinet consists of senior education leaders, including the president of the community college system, the president of the state university system, and the superintendent of the Department of Public Instruction. This follows on other conversations about Achieving the Dream in the state legislature and at North Carolina State University's annual *Emerging Issues* forum held in February, in which all three system leaders participated. The brief was presented as an example of the initiative's work and the state's participation in it.

President Martin Lancaster announces retirement; COO Fred Williams, too: The top two leaders of the North Carolina Community College System, President H. Martin Lancaster and Executive Vice President and COO Fred Williams, announced that they will be retiring, Williams in September 2007 and Lancaster in May 2008. The twin retirements will be staggered so a new president can come in as COO in September and work with President Lancaster for eight months. According to Lancaster, "There comes a time for Fred and me to ride off into the sunset." Their leadership will be missed. Bob Greene, past president of Forsyth Technical Community College, noted that Lancaster stood "head and shoulders above the rest." Achieving the Dream thanks President Lancaster and the NCCCS leadership for all their support and engagement. We wish both Martin and Fred the very best in their retirement—but we aren't rushing them. We look forward to working with them in the interim and with their successors.

The Pennsylvania Governor's Commission on Success in College and Career has released recommendations designed to move Pennsylvania away from its position as one of the few states with no statewide graduation requirements.

OHIO

Head of Ohio community college association moves into Strickland administration: Terry Thomas, former executive director of the Ohio Association of Community Colleges and member of the Ohio state policy team for Achieving the Dream, has accepted a job with the Strickland administration as assistant director of the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services, the agency responsible for the state's workforce development system, among other programs and services.

Better alignment of workforce development policies proceeds: In recent years, KnowledgeWorks Foundation, the Ohio lead organization for Achieving the Dream, worked hard through its participation in the Ford Foundation Bridges to Opportunity initiative to promote better alignment of the state's fragmented and duplicative systems of adult and career education. The recommendations of the task force on these issues, which was staffed by KnowledgeWorks Foundation, were reviewed carefully by the incoming administration of Governor Ted Strickland. The executive budget proposal includes language for implementing workforce development activities between the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services and the Ohio Department of Development in support of a unified economic development strategy. Additionally, the Ohio Department of Education and the Board of Regents will collaborate to identify programs in adult and career technical education that can be transferred to the Board of Regents, effective July 1, 2008.

To view the executive budget proposal, go to: www.obm.ohio.gov/budget/operating/ executive/0809.

Changes at the Board of Regents: The Board of Regents has appointed former Senator Eric Fingerhut of Cleveland as chancellor, replacing Roderick Chu. However, the very structure and responsibilities of the board are under consideration by the legislature. Two governance-restructuring measures under review in the House (HB 2 & HB 85) propose to enhance the chancellor's role in state policymaking by making the position a gubernatorial appointment and a cabinet-level position.

PENNSYLVANIA

Articulation efforts continue: Pennsylvania's 14 community colleges and 14 state universities are working together to establish a set of courses that would be guaranteed for transfer between the 28 institutions and be counted toward graduation requirements. Under legislation adopted last year, the institutions are mandated to agree to "foundation courses" equal to 30 credits that would be eligible for transfer. While not the complete transfer of the Associate's degree, the community colleges collectively support this as a starting point and hope that work will progress beyond the 30 credits later this year. Eventually, a Web site will be developed so that students will be able to access information and understand which courses will transfer to which specific institutions.

College readiness and rigor in high school: The Governor's Commission on Success in College and Career has released recommendations designed to move Pennsylvania away from its position as one of the few states with no statewide graduation requirements. The commission's recommendations for increased rigor in high school include a statewide set of graduation requirements that conform to the American Diploma Project agenda of high standards that prepare young people for college and careers. As part of its deliberations, the commission worked with Pennsylvania businesses and colleges to develop definitions of college and career readiness—referred to as College and Career Essentials. Definitions for math and English have been completed; science definitions are underway. The commission encourages colleges and universities to use the Essentials in developing their placement exams to build alignment between the P-12 and higher education systems. The commission also makes recommendations regarding programs to encourage economically and educationally disadvantaged students to complete college.

Read the commission's final report at: www.project720.org/images/stories/commission/20final%20report%2012-22-06.pdf.

The Virginia Community College System has issued a half-time report on its progress toward measurable goals in a number of areas, to be reached by 2009.

TEXAS

TACC unveils and promotes new compact for community colleges: The Texas Association of Community Colleges has proposed to the Texas legislature a New Compact for funding community colleges. It includes a plan to provide incentive funding to colleges, and two components are consistent with Achieving the Dream. First, the compact proposes that community colleges receive innovation funding, with the goal of improving student participation and student success. The second component focuses on student success and incentive funds that reward institutional progress in improving student outcomes. The idea of providing incentives for positive outcomes is getting traction this legislative session. Texas Governor Rick Perry proposed an incentive plan for all of higher education. State Senator Florence Shapiro, chair of the Senate Education Committee, filed SB 1029, which mirrors the governor's plan. SB 1029 and TACC's New Compact move in a similar direction: toward incentives that increase attention to improving student outcomes and toward rewards for addressing effectively the needs of at-risk populations.

New immigration bills proposed in state legislature: The Texas legislature has seen a flood of legislation around immigration. At least 30 bills have been filed in the 80th legislature, currently in session, including bills to revisit the state law that grants in-state tuition to undocumented students. Most of the legislation filed would make it harder for undocumented immigrants to live in Texas. The state attorney general's office was asked to review some of these bills and outline parameters for state action with regard to immigration. The attorney general's office concluded that in most cases federal law around immigration preempts state law, which has led some policymakers to urge the state to wait for congressional action before taking action. However, it was the lack of congressional action that prompted many state lawmakers to file these bills. The Texas State Affairs and Border Affairs Committees have invited public testimony on the subject. A coalition of business, political, and community leaders has called on policy-

makers to consider the contributions of immigrants, including undocumented immigrants, to the state economy.

VIRGINIA

Virginia Community Colleges issue half-time report on Dateline 2009: In 2003, the Virginia Community College System took the bold step of setting clear, measurable goals and benchmarks for the system in a number of areas, to be reached by 2009. Goals cover: enrollment; workforce training; retention and completion; tuition; transfer; dual enrollment; and private funding.

To view an easy-to-understand set of charts showing progress in meeting Dateline goals, go to: www.vccs.edu/vccsars/Research/Dateline09.htm.

Chancellor's Transfer Scholarship heads to governor's desk: A program that will make a four-year college degree more affordable for some community college graduates was approved by the General Assembly Saturday and is headed to the office of Governor Tim Kaine for his consideration. As approved by the General Assembly, the legislation, originally proposed by Senator Walter A. Stosch and House of Delegates Speaker Vincent F. Callahan, would allow students entering a Virginia community college (or Richard Bland College) in the fall of 2007 to be eligible for a transfer grant if they receive an Associate's degree, maintain a 3.0 grade point average or better, and meet financial aid requirements. The grant will go toward their tuition expenses at a four-year college or university. The legislation provides a \$1,000 grant for all eligible students, with an extra \$1,000 for students who pursue undergraduate work in engineering, math, nursing, teaching, or science. The funds will be available to students whose families have an expected family contribution of \$8,000 or less, as determined through federal financial aid forms. Key supporters of the bill during the 2007 session included the independent student advocacy group, Virginia21.

WASHINGTON

Progress being made on measures for community college student achievement incentive system. In September 2007, the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges adopted three goals for the college system. The Student Achievement initiative is intended to address the second goal: to improve academic achievement for all students. The idea is to create an incentive system that rewards improvements in student achievement. In July 2006, the presidents approved formation of a system task force. Composed of presidents, trustees, state board members, faculty union representatives, and a system advisory group made up of instruction and student services administrators, business officers, and faculty, the task force will develop and propose a measurement and incentive system. These groups are meeting and working to define principles and goals, establish the momentum points and measures that can capture student progress clearly, and identify funding incentives for the system. Recommendations are expected to be forwarded to the State Board in June.

Summer Academy will focus on student success.

This summer, the Association of Washington Community and Technical College Administrators Academy will focus on using data to achieve student success. One highlight will be the efforts of Achieving the Dream colleges in using data on student outcomes to drive institutional improvement. The annual event will bring together administrators and professional staff from across the state.

Achieving the Dream reaches broad community college audience.

The State Board of Community and Technical Colleges is working hard to make Achieving the Dream, its goals, and its strategies more visible and understood across the state's community colleges and their employees. The State Board staff made presentations on Achieving the Dream to the Instruction Commission and the Student Services commissions. This was organized by the chairs of the commissions as a result of their participation at the policy meeting in Albuquerque. The commissions are comprised of vice presidents representing all 34 community and technical colleges. In addition, commission chairs now send electronic copies of this newsletter to their members.

Resources

SREB Reports on Aligning State Policies for College Readiness

High School to College and Careers: Aligning State Policies 2007 is a new report of the Southern Regional Education Board and part of its *Challenge to Lead* series, which monitors trends in and benchmarks the 16 member states against a number of education goals. This report documents the considerable variation in programs and requirements for a student's transition from high school to college and careers across SREB states. States differ in their policies on courses and tests required in high school, early outreach, joint enrollment, college admission and placement standards, college reports to high schools about their graduates' performance, and state financial aid. The report provides a one-page summary of each state's policies in these areas. SREB urges each

member state to develop readiness standards and incorporate them explicitly into high school teaching and testing.

www.sreb.org/main/Goals/Publications/06E20_Aligning_2007.pdf

Kentucky Task Force Recommends Policy Agenda to Improve Developmental Education

In 2006, the Kentucky Council of Postsecondary Education created the Developmental Education Task Force and charged it with constructing a comprehensive plan for improving the outcomes of postsecondary developmental education. The 18-member task force worked with state and national experts (including some associated with Achieving the Dream) and reviewed current practices and research on best practices.

The task force developed six core recommendations that address both the challenge of reducing the number of under prepared students and increasing the success of colleges with the under prepared students they admit.

Download the report at www.cpe.ky.gov/NR/rdonlyres/CBAA5350-E515-42E2-8D8B-B5E61286135C/0/DevEdTaskForce_FullReport_FINALFORWEB.pdf

National, Not Federal, Unit Record System Emerging, Says NCHEMS

The idea of a federal system to track student progress into and through higher education, as proposed by the federal government, has been extremely controversial. Yet a multi-state, “national” system, based on the independent systems that have emerged in the vast majority of states, is already under development. This is a key finding of a new report by Peter Ewell and Marianne Boeke of the National Center for Higher Education Management Systems. *Critical Connections: Linking States’ Unit Record Systems to Track Student Progress*, sponsored by Lumina Foundation for Education, suggests that more cooperation among states could greatly improve the nation’s ability to follow the progress of students as they transfer among different institutions and different states—even without a federal unit record data system. The report follows a similar 2003 review of state systems to track data at the student level. The study offers a state-by-state inventory of the nation’s student unit record data systems, with regard to the quality of information, their integration with other data systems, and tracking students’ movement between institutions.

www.luminafoundation.org/publications/Critical_Connections_Web.pdf

How Policy Incentives Can Help Drive Student Success in Higher Education

Strategies for Improving Student Success in Postsecondary Education, by higher education expert Art Hauptman, is the latest commissioned paper from the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education’s Changing Direction project, funded by Lumina Foundation for Education. The paper makes four suggestions for changes in state policies that would help improve retention and degree-completion rates for a broad range of students. Hauptman recommends: increasing funding for early-intervention programs for at-risk students; including more stringent preparation requirements as part of eligibility for state

need-based aid programs; targeting student aid funds toward more students from underrepresented groups; and paying institutions for the number of Pell Grant recipients who finish a year of student, transfer, or complete a degree.

www.wiche.edu/Policy/Changing_direction/documents/student_success.pdf

What Factors Affect Academic Progress in Community Colleges?

Promoting Academic Momentum at Community Colleges: Challenges and Opportunities, by Sara Goldrick-Rab of the Community College Research Center at Teachers College, Columbia University, looks at the sources of slow academic progress in community colleges. Goldrick-Rab focuses on institutional factors and student characteristics that influence success. She argues that the lack of progress is “due to the complex ways in which social and educational inequalities affect specific students and the institutions of higher education designated to serve them. As a result, policymakers and practitioners face significant challenges to their efforts to promote academic momentum.” Goldrick-Rab emphasizes the ways in which family background, prior educational experiences, and educational expectations intersect with colleges’ institutional structures, practices, and policies. She concludes with a careful analysis of existing empirical research to identify opportunities for improvement in accelerating community college students’ academic momentum.

<http://ccrc.tc.columbia.edu/Publication.asp?UID=492>

Grappling with Quality, Cost and Access Challenges in Higher Education

To bring attention to the productivity problem in higher education—that the nation and individual students are spending more and getting less—Jobs for the Future has released *Hitting Home*, the product of a collaboration with the National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education and the National Center for Higher Education Management Systems, funded by Lumina Foundation for Education. *Hitting Home* compares the production of degrees and stagnating educational attainment rates in the United States with those of the country’s top international competitors. The report calls on states and colleges to serve more students without sacrificing quality—at a cost that students and taxpayers can afford. The report was prepared for Making Opportunity Affordable, a new national initiative on college

quality, cost, and access in higher education, supported by Lumina Foundation for Education and managed by JFF.

www.makingopportunityaffordable.org

Department of Education Moves to Follow up on Secretary's Commission on the Future of Higher Education

In fall 2006, the Secretary's Commission on the Future of Higher Education released its report, *A Test of Leadership: Charting the Future of U.S. Higher Education*. This March, the department followed up with a day-long Higher Education Summit. About 300 leaders of higher education institutions and organizations met to discuss and define a national agenda based on the commission's work. Recommendations were debated and refined in five broad areas: aligning K-12 and higher education expectations; increasing need-based aid for access and success; using accreditation to support and emphasize student learning outcomes; enhancing affordability, decreasing

costs, and promoting productivity; and serving adults and other non-traditional students.

At the same time, the department has been aggressively moving to advance elements of the commission's agenda that are within its purview. One example is negotiated rulemaking around the new American Competitiveness Grants and SMART Grants. Another is a set of proposed regulatory changes that would require accrediting agencies to become much more involved in assessing the extent to which colleges they oversee are succeeding in educating their students.

To download A Test of Leadership, go to: www.ed.gov/about/bdscomm/list/hiedfuture/index.html.

For information on proposed accreditation rules, see: insidehighered.com/layout/set/print/news/2007/03/23/accredit.

And for reaction from accreditors and colleges, see: insidehighered.com/layout/set/print/news/2007/03/28/accredit.