



Achieving the Dream State Policy Newsletter August 2005

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INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the second issue of the Achieving the Dream state policy newsletter.

This newsletter is published by Jobs for the Future in our capacity as organizers of the state policy component of the Achieving the Dream, a national initiative funded by the Lumina Foundation for Education, to increase the success of community college students, particularly those in groups that have been underserved in higher education. (See www.jff.org for more on JFF and our role in this initiative.)

In this issue, our topical focus is the overall framework for the initiative's state policy work, which targets six state policy "levers" that can play a significant role in helping community colleges in their efforts to improve student outcomes. The state update this issue reports on recent developments in Virginia related to that state's efforts to strengthen community college student success. An issue brief summary presents

highlights of the recently published *State Systems of Performance Accountability for Community Colleges: Impacts and Lessons for Policymakers* by Kevin Dougherty and Esther Hong. Personnel developments in lead organizations and in key policy positions in initiative states are noted. Other updates and resources include: a report on recent developments in Achieving the Dream and other states on policies affecting undocumented students in community colleges; brief notes on useful publications and resources related to developmental education practice and policy.

We hope you find this newsletter useful—and we look forward to your suggestions. Send them to: Radha Roy Biswas, Jobs for the Future (rrbiswas@jff.org).

FRAMEWORK FOR IDENTIFYING AND SETTING STATE POLICY PRIORITIES

Jobs for the Future has recently developed an overall framework for state policy work in Achieving the Dream states. Derived from conversations with participating colleges, state lead organizations, initiative partners, and JFF’s own state work over the years, the framework identifies six state policy “levers” that can play a significant role in helping community colleges in their efforts to improve student outcomes, particularly for less-academically prepared students. We include here a few pages of a work-in-progress that elaborate upon these policy levers and their power in the context of Achieving the Dream.

The state activities to advance Achieving the Dream goals will focus on these priorities:

- ***A Clear Public Policy Commitment:*** In a crowded policy environment, a strong consensus statement of what Achieving the Dream wants to accomplish at the state level and why is critical. This should include:
 - A clear public statement expressing a commitment to improving college success rates for all students
 - Specification of measurable goals for increases in the number of credentials earned by community college

students and the rates at which different student groups earn degrees and certificates.

- ***Strong Data-driven Accountability System:*** If student success is the ultimate goal, then a prior step must be strengthening of the state data system and infrastructure so that colleges can use data on their students progress more effectively for institutional change. States data systems should be organized so that the progress of any student entering a community college can be followed over time and essential demographic and prior educational information can be linked. Activities might include:
 - Strengthening of integrated data system—linking K-12, community colleges, higher education, adult education, welfare, and employment systems
 - Design—or revision—of performance reporting system to be more stable, equitable, and flexible
 - Incentives to strengthen institutional research capability
 - Incentives to institutions to close identified gaps and reward strong/improved outcomes

- ***Aligned Expectations, Standards, Assessments, and Transition Requirements Across Educational Systems:*** A key challenge facing most states' community college systems extends beyond the colleges themselves to their relationships with other segments of the public education and skill development system: Important policy issues to address within each of these, include:
 - Alignment with the K-12 System: P-16 or P-20 governance or collaboration mechanisms; better signaling of college academic expectations to high school students; initiatives to target improvement of poor-performing high schools; strengthening of dual enrollment and other methods of "college in high school" that involve community colleges.
 - Alignment with four-year colleges and universities: Clear transfer policy goals; simpler and regularized transfer policies (e.g., course requirements and transferability); incentive funding for transfers; financial aid policies that help transfer students.

- Alignment with the adult education and workforce systems: Better alignment of adult education standards and instruction with expectations of developmental education; reassessment of governance of adult education; alignment and simplification of transition from non-credit workforce programs to credit courses and programs within community colleges; promotion of work-based career ladder credential programs.
- ***Incentives for Improving Services to Academically Underprepared Students***: State policies that make it easier to serve students who are academically underprepared and that reward colleges for improving the availability of quality learning opportunities, services and supports for these students can be a powerful spur to persistence and success. State policy can promote stronger:
 - Developmental education (issues such as curriculum, technology, linkage to credit programs and courses, teacher quality, placement policies, financing, accountability)
 - Advising and counseling and other student supports
 - First year experience programs
 - Curricular and instructional innovation and improvement
- ***Financial Aid Policies and other Financial Incentives that Promote Persistence***: Part-time enrollment caused by the need to earn income increases the risk of non-completion. A range of state policies might help address the negative impact of financial need on community college students, both those entering right out of high school and adults who are enrolling from the world of work. These might include:
 - Financial aid for part-time students
 - Need-based state aid, including support beyond tuition
 - Strategies to increase take-up of federal financial aid
- ***Public Support***: Despite a reservoir of general good will toward community colleges, it is not easy for colleges to compete for policy attention and priority against K-12, four-year institutions and systems, and non-education needs. State policy strategies must be complemented by communications and stakeholder engagement

efforts that raise community college student success higher on the public agenda.

A more detailed presentation of this framework and will be available this fall for public distribution.

UPDATE ON STATE DATA SYSTEM PROJECT

This summer, all ten original states in the Bridges to Opportunity and Achieving the Dream initiatives have hosted a day-long “data audit” conducted by NCHEMS (the National Center for Higher Education Management Systems) in conjunction with Jobs for the Future and the Community College Research Center. (Connecticut, a new entrant to Achieving the Dream, will be visited later this fall.) At these meetings, NCHEMS, JFF, and CCRC worked with a group of knowledgeable representatives of data collection offices in the state, college institutional research offices, and other interested parties to identify strengths and weaknesses in the data systems that track community college students’ progress and success—and in the ability of those data systems to be linked together to answer important questions about outcomes for different student subgroups.

In the coming months, NCHEMS will deliver a report to each state on its data collection and warehousing systems, with recommendations for concrete steps to improve and strengthen those systems. Recommendations will emphasize how states can use available or easily collectable data more effectively. In January, findings will be discussed with representatives of both Bridges and Achieving the Dream states. A final report will be published in the spring.

The states and the three organizations leading this effort are hopeful that this first phase of information-gathering and recommendations will lead some or all of the participating states to make progress in strengthening their data systems—and will engage them collectively in follow-up efforts to work together. One possible follow-up project would focus on developing a mechanism for states to benchmark against other states the performance of their community colleges on measures of student success in the community college and in further education and the labor market.

For further information, contact Richard Kazis, Jobs for the Future (rkazis@jff.org) or Dennis Jones, NCHEMS (dennis@nchems.org).

STATE COMMUNITY COLLEGE DIRECTORS MEETING: GROWING INTEREST IN STATE DATA PROJECT

State directors from Achieving the Dream states met with their counterparts from across the country at the annual conference of State Directors of Community Colleges at Lake Tahoe, Nevada on August 14-16, 2005.

Martin Lancaster, President of the North Carolina Community College System, **Frank Renz**, Executive Director of the New Mexico Association of Community Colleges, and **Glenda Barron**, Assistant Commissioner from the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, participated in a panel discussion on the impact of the Achieving the Dream initiative in their respective states. Joined by colleagues from two states in the Bridges to Opportunity community college policy project funded by the Ford Foundation, the panel shared the progress of the joint state data project (see above for description.). The panel was moderated by JFF team member, Katherine Boswell, and Margaret Rivera of the American Association of Community Colleges

As these leaders discussed their involvement in the state data project and their commitment to the goals and strategies of Achieving the Dream, a number of other states expressed significant interest in exploring potential opportunities for additional cross-state collaboration as the data project evolves. This interest will be nurtured and encouraged: the prospect of engaging additional states in a project to improve student outcome data systems is an exciting one.

STATE UPDATE: VCCS ACTIVITIES TO PROMOTE STUDENT SUCCESS

In each issue, we present an update from at least one Achieving the Dream state on state efforts and activities to promote the agenda of student success. Monte Sullivan, the new Vice Chancellor for Academic Services for the Virginia Community College System, provides this update:

Achieving the Dream to reach all VCCS colleges: As a part of the Higher Education Restructuring Act requirements, the VCCS has drafted its formal response to the law's academic component. The response specifies the Achieving the Dream initiative as a prominent feature of the System's six-year academic plan. The response highlights implementation of the Achieving the Dream initiative at five colleges in the first biennium. The System also makes the commitment to implement Achieving the Dream processes at the remaining 18 colleges within the VCCS during the second biennium. The best practices of the initiative will be institutionalized throughout the VCCS in the third biennium.

Proposal to move Adult Basic Education responsibility to VCCS: The VCCS is currently in conversation with the Virginia Department of Education regarding the possibility of moving Adult Basic Education (ABE) from the responsibility of the Department of Education to the VCCS. There appears to be interest in effecting such a transition, which could improve the reach and effectiveness of adult education as a route to postsecondary success. The move could mean increased access to ABE instruction and testing to the Commonwealth's citizens. Additionally, it could solidify the ABE market as a pool of prospective community college students and make it easier for low-skill adults to transition from ABE to community college programming.

Chancellor's Retreat studies CCSSE results: VCCS Chancellor Glenn DuBois held his annual Chancellor's Retreat August 4 and 5 in Charlottesville, Virginia. The meeting focused the efforts of all 23 colleges and the system staff on improving student retention, using the results of the Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE), which was administered to students at all 23 of the System's colleges. The Retreat was attended by approximately 175 participants including the leadership teams of all 23 colleges. The five Achieving the Dream colleges described the retention-related research they have done to date and their plans for the implementation phase of Achieving the Dream.

Transfer incentive proposed: The Chancellor has proposed a Transfer Scholarship program that would create an incentive for students completing an associate degree at a Virginia community college who then transfer to the state university system. The incentive to a student who graduates with a GPA of B or better would include tuition at the

community college rate in the student's junior and senior year at the university, saving the student and his or her family money over the last two years of college. The university would receive \$1000 per transfer student. The state, according to the Chancellor, would spend \$4 million annually for the incentive, but would save \$4500 for every student who began his or her career at a community college before transferring. The proposed incentive will encourage more community college students to complete the associate degree while increasing university access to more of the Commonwealth's citizens. (The system will have to be careful, though, that any incentive designed to divert students from four-year to two-year institutions does not make it more difficult for students who want to earn a baccalaureate to persist and earn their degree).

NEW LEADERSHIP FOR STATE POLICY EFFORTS

New Mexico Gets First Cabinet Secretary for Higher Education

Dr. Beverlee McClure, President of Clovis Community College in rural New Mexico since 1999, has been named by Governor Bill Richardson to be the first Higher Education Cabinet Secretary in New Mexico, subject to Senate confirmation. The position was created by passage of a law in the last session of the state legislature creating a Department of Higher Education to replace the Commission on Higher Education. Dr. McClure has also served in various capacities—instructor, vice president, and provost—at community colleges in Florida, Arkansas and Texas. At the news conference announcing the appointment, Governor Richardson said, “I expect Dr. McClure to drive a statewide agenda for higher education—one that ties together a common commitment among all our colleges and universities to ensure that all students graduate. Most important, I want New Mexicans prepared for the workforce, and I want our institutions of higher education to work with me to create a high-wage economy that moves New Mexico forward.” NMACC and the *Achieving the Dream* colleges look forward to working closely with Dr. McClure.

New Achieving the Dream Personnel in Three States

New staff have become involved with Achieving the Dream state efforts in North Carolina, Virginia and New Mexico. Short bios of each of these individuals follow:

VIRGINIA

Monty Sullivan. Dr. Monty Sullivan assumed the position of Vice Chancellor for Academic Services and Research for the Virginia Community College System in June 2005. He will lead the System's involvement in Achieving the Dream. Dr. Sullivan previously served as Vice Chancellor for Academic and Student Affairs for Louisiana Delta Community College in Monroe, Louisiana. Prior to that, Monty was Director of the Center for Rural Development at Louisiana State University and Louisiana Tech. His doctorate, masters and BA degrees were all earned at Louisiana Tech.

NORTH CAROLINA

Blake Reynolds, Ph.D. began as Director of the Achieving the Dream Initiative for the NCCCS office in June. Dr. Reynolds recently relocated to North Carolina from California where he had opened his own career counseling services business working with individuals from diverse groups. Blake has worked in Workforce Development at a Los Angeles County Community College. He has also provided lead Case Management and Disability Counseling Coordination for a Los Angeles Work Source Center.

NEW MEXICO

Tyler Welden. The New Mexico Association of Community Colleges, the lead organization in New Mexico for Achieving the Dream policy development, has hired Ms. to help enhance the data and research capacity of NMACC to better inform its public policy initiatives. Ms. Weldon has over five years experience in research, data analysis, oral and written report presentation, grantwriting, teaching, and project coordination. Ms. Weldon will be working closely with other NMACC staff on *Achieving the Dream* implementation.

NEW ACHIEVING THE DREAM POLICY BRIEF: ON PERFORMANCE ACCOUNTABILITY SYSTEMS

Jobs for the Future recently published the fourth in a series of policy briefs for Achieving the Dream. *State Systems of Performance Accountability for Community Colleges: Impact and Lessons for Policymakers*, by Kevin Dougherty and Esther Hong of the Community College Research Center, Teachers College, Columbia University, looks at trends in performance accountability in state higher education systems. The brief takes a close look at systems established in nine states: the five

Achieving the Dream states (Florida, New Mexico, North Carolina, Texas and Virginia) and four other states (California, Illinois, New York and Washington).

The brief describes the different types of performance accountability systems that have been introduced: *performance funding* where a portion of state funding is tied directly to institutional performance; *performance budgeting* where the connection between funding and performance is more flexible; and *performance reporting*, the most prevalent, in which the main impetus for institutional improvement is provided not by shifts in funding, but through changes in institutional and public awareness that come with public dissemination of performance data. The brief examines the impacts – both intended and unintended -- of performance accountability in the nine states and makes policy recommendations for the better design of such systems.

Since the 1990s, 47 states have experimented in some way with performance accountability, tracking not just enrollment but key education outcomes such as gains in student learning, retention and graduation rates, and placement in good jobs. Forty-six states have adopted a system of performance reporting, while 15 have performance funding.

However, the systems have had only a moderate impact on the behavior of community colleges, primarily through changes in awareness resulting from performance reporting. Moreover, the effect on student outcomes is still unclear. Performance in key indicators -- remedial success, retention, graduation, transfers and job placements—varies substantially among the states studied and is weakly correlated with the type or strength of accountability system. The authors document problematic unintended consequences, including high compliance costs, incentives for colleges to lower academic standards to boost graduation and completion rates, and the risk of restricting the broad mission of community colleges.

The report proposes a series of design changes that can help institutions and states avoid some of the problems of current systems, including: increased institutional capacity to implement systems; changes in some of the measures; and policies and standards that recognize local differences, factor in different student populations in community colleges, and recognize the broader mission of community colleges.

Kevin Dougherty and Esther Hong. 2005. *State Systems of Performance Accountability for Community Colleges: Impacts and Lessons for Policymakers*. Jobs for the Future. <http://www.jff.org/jff/kc/library/0256>

UPDATE: UNDOCUMENTED STUDENTS IN COMMUNITY COLLEGES

How to serve illegal immigrants who want to enroll in community colleges—in terms of access, tuition, and financial aid—remains a hot state policy concern. In the last issue of this newsletter, we noted that **New Mexico and Florida** passed legislation in their recently concluded sessions that made it easier for certain groups of undocumented students to afford public higher education. Since that time, in **North Carolina**, public backlash against illegal immigrants led to the legislature's decision to abandon proposed legislation that would allow all children of undocumented immigrants to pay in-state rates at North Carolina's public universities if they have attended NC public schools for four years, graduate from a state high school, and meet other criteria such as admission to a state university. This legislative effort has prompted intense reactions on both sides of the issue. **Colorado** is revisiting this issue for the third consecutive year, as it contemplates legislation that would grant in-state tuition to undocumented students who have graduated from its high schools and have resided in the state for at least three years.

A summary of the proposed legislation, House Bill 05-1124, along with an analysis of federal and other state action on this issue, is available in a recently released report from The Bell Policy Center. **Texas**, which in 2001 became the first state to pass legislation allowing in-state tuition and financial aid for undocumented students, has seen a sharp spike in the numbers of such students in its colleges and universities. According to an article published this July in the *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, which cites state data, nearly 3700 undocumented students were enrolled and paying in-state tuition in Texas public institutions by fall 2004, a dramatic rise from 2001, when the figure was 393. More than three fourths of these students are in community colleges.

Radhas Roy Biswas, *Access to Community College for Undocumented Immigrants: A Guide for State Policy Makers*. ATD Policy Brief. <http://www.jff.org/jff/kc/library/0248>

Patrick McGee, *Immigrant College Aid is Debated*. Fort Worth Star-Telegram, July 21, 2005 (available for a fee).

<http://www.dfw.com/mld/dfw/>

Spiros Protopsaltis, *Undocumented Immigrant Students and Access to Higher Education:*

An Overview of Federal and State Policy. The Bell Policy Center Policy Brief.

<http://www.thebell.org>

RESOURCES: DEVELOPMENTAL EDUCATION POLICY

At the June *Achieving the Dream* State Policy Meeting in Chicago, teams from the initiative states discussed policies and practices to strengthen developmental education, beginning with research on practices that appear promising and moving to policy approaches to support more effective remediation at the institutional level. Below are some of the studies and articles that were distributed and/or referred to at that meeting.

Dolores Perin of the Community College Research Center and Teachers College has recently published an overview of current organizational and instructional approaches to developmental education at fifteen community colleges across the country. The study, part of the National Field Study conducted by the Community College Research Center, found a great variety of practices at the colleges, highlighting a lack of consensus on how best to increase academic preparedness. The author provides a template for institutional decision-making to improve developmental education outcomes: a four-step process to guide college administrators and faculty so they are better able to plan for preparing students for college curricula.

Dolores Perin, "Institutional Decision Making for Increasing Academic Preparedness in Community Colleges," *New Directions in Community Colleges: Responding to the Challenges of Developmental Education*, vol. 129, pp. 27-38. <http://ccrc.tc.columbia.edu/Publication.asp?UID=278>

A second study by Dolores Perin took a close look at the use of learning assistance centers and specialized skill labs in fifteen community colleges around the country. This study concluded that academic support centers are an important means of increasing students' academic readiness for college-level work, providing an important remedial role in math, reading and writing, primarily through tutoring and computer-assisted instruction. The college in the study reported increases in retention in English and increases in GPA. Perin recommends that future research compare the effectiveness of learning assistance services and developmental education courses in boosting students' basic academic skills.

Dolores Perin, 2004. "Remediation Beyond Developmental Education: The Use of Learning Assistance Centers to Increase Academic Preparedness in Community Colleges." *Community College Journal of Research and Practice*. 28: 559-582.

<http://taylorandfrancis.metapress.com/app/home/contribution.asp?wasp=3bc3e3eb7b394c07a11986bd850c5284&referrer=parent&backto=issue,1,7;journal,11,62;linkingpublicationresults,1:102434,1> (Registration required)

Eric Bettinger and Bridget Terry Long, Professors from Case Western Reserve University and the Harvard Graduate School of Education respectively, examined the effects of math and English remediation in a study using a dataset of 28,000 Ohio freshmen. The results suggest that students in remediation are more likely to persist in college when compared to students with similar test scores and backgrounds who were not required to take the courses. Students placed in developmental education are also more likely to transfer to a higher-level college and to complete a bachelor's degree than similar students who were not required to take developmental courses. The authors emphasize that their findings may be less relevant for students who come to college with seriously deficient in English and math skills. The methodology used in this study may lend itself to replication or adaptation for study in other states with good data systems of the effects of taking developmental education.

Eric P. Bettinger and Bridget Terry Long, "Addressing the Needs of Under-Prepared Students in Higher Education: Does College Remediation Work?"

<http://gseacademic.harvard.edu/~longbr/research-newformat.htm>

Ernest Pascarella and Patrick Terenzini have published a new edition of their comprehensive review of research on how college affects students. The chapter on educational attainment and persistence (Chapter 8) synthesizes research on a range of factors that affect persistence, including programmatic interventions such as developmental education, first-year seminars, advising and counseling, and supplemental instruction. A very useful way to understand the research evidence on program effectiveness in improving attainment and persistence.

Ernest Pascarella and Patrick Terenzini. 2005 *How College Affects Students. Volume 2. A Third Decade of Research.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass. pp. 373- 444.

Opening Doors is a research project led by MDRC testing special programs at six community colleges to test special programs designed to increase student persistence and achievement. One of the participating colleges is Kingsborough Community College in Brooklyn, New York. Kingsborough is testing a learning communities model for freshmen students, most of whom failed one or more placement tests in reading, writing, and math. The program places incoming freshmen in cohorts up to 25 students for three first-semester courses, supported by extra tutoring, counseling, and a voucher to purchase books. The rigorous evaluation by MDRC has found that the first group of participating students have achieved higher course pass rates, particularly in English and were more likely to complete remedial English requirements after one year than peers in the control group. Future reports will assess results for more students over a longer timer period.

Dan Bloom and Collen Sommo. 2005. *Building Learning Communities: Early Results from the Opening Doors Demonstration at Kingsborough Community College.* New York: MDRC.

<http://www.mdrc.org/publications/410/overview.html>