

STATE
POLICY
NEWSLETTER

March 2006

CONTENTS

- 1 Introduction
- 1 Efforts to Improve State Data Systems Get a Boost
- 2 Achieving the Dream States Convene on Policy
- 2 Achieving the Dream Web site Launched
- 3 Viewpoint: An Interview with Don Hudson, Texas Association of Community Colleges
- 5 State Updates
- 7 Resources Related to Student Success
- 9 Nominations Sought
- 9 Upcoming Events



Jobs for the Future
88 Broad Street
Boston, MA 02110
617.728.4446
www.jff.org

Introduction

Welcome to the March 2006 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, KnowledgeWorks Foundation, and Nellie Mae Education Foundation 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.)

2006 began with two policy-related meetings for Achieving the Dream. From January 10-12, the eleven states participating in the Achieving the Dream and Ford Foundation Bridges to Opportunity initiatives met in San Antonio to discuss the

potential for joint efforts to strengthen state data systems and establish a set of common indicators to benchmark their progress on the data front. At the end of the month, Achieving the Dream state teams met in Orlando to share knowledge and progress and to determine the next steps forward for their policy initiatives. We report on these meetings below.

You will also find our regular features. In Viewpoint, Don Hudson, Vice President of the Texas Association of Community Colleges, talks about how Achieving the Dream is helping the association meet its goals and the benefits and challenges of the initiative in Texas. We also bring you up to date on new developments in policy, personnel, publications, and events in Achieving the Dream states, as well as resources and news on relevant developments around the country.

Efforts to Improve State Data Systems Get a Boost

The 11 states participating in the Achieving the Dream and Ford Bridges to Opportunity initiatives met in San Antonio, January 10-12, 2006, to discuss the potential for joint efforts to strengthen state data systems. Peter Ewell of the National Center for State Higher Education Management Systems presented findings from the “data system audit” visits his organization made to all participating states in recent months. His report identifies the strengths and weaknesses of state data systems in terms of their ability to track individuals to and through community college longitudinally and across different institutions and segments of the

education, workforce, and employment systems. The report suggests opportunities for state collaboration on strengthening their student record data systems. The report, *Reaching Consensus on Common Indicators: A Feasibility Analysis: Final Report*, can be downloaded at <http://www.achievingthedream.org/PUBLICPOLICY/STATEDATAPROJECT/default.tp>

The suggestions from the report kicked off the two day meeting of the eleven states at the meeting: Colorado, Connecticut, Florida, Kentucky, Louisiana, New Mexico, North Carolina, Ohio, Texas, Virginia,

continued ►

and Washington. The states grappled with issues around the relationship of their community college data systems to K-12, higher education, workforce development, welfare, adult basic education, and ESL student record data systems, as well as to Unemployment Insurance data. There was significant interest in working together on developing a benchmarking consortium that could define indicators that might shed more light on community college performance for students than current indicators—and could be collected and benchmarked across states. State teams also expressed interest in identifying other

opportunities to work together, such as trying to help some states overcome privacy concerns that limit access to transfer data and finding methods for identifying students' income levels so variations in performance by income can be analyzed.

The sense of urgency felt by many at the meeting stems from the perceived inadequacy of the federal Student Right to Know reporting requirements, which cover only first-time, full-time, degree-seeking students. As Frank Renz of the New Mexico Community College Association noted, that leaves out 90 to 95 percent of community college enrollments in his state.

Achieving the Dream Web site Launched

Achieving the Dream finally has its own Web site, thanks to MDC and the American Association of Community Colleges. The Web site is designed for the convenience of various audiences and stakeholders—colleges, policy-makers, students, the public—and, along with a project overview, has distinct sections and pages for each.

In the public policy section, *state profiles* provide quick descriptions of community college systems, as well as contact and background information on the Achieving the Dream lead organizations and state policy contacts. Policy briefs and other initiative policy publications can be downloaded from this site, including past issues of this newsletter.

Check it out at:
www.achievingthedream.org.

Achieving the Dream States Convene on Policy

Teams from all seven Achieving the Dream states convened on Orlando at the end of January for their semi-annual state policy meeting. Topics that were discussed included:

- State data systems;
- Need-based financial aid; and
- Developmental education.

States presented their policy strategies and work plans for the coming year and had to defend their plans against questioning from peers from other states who role-played being legislative committee staffers or governor's advisors. Materials prepared for the meeting are available on the Achieving the Dream Web site on the policy pages.

State data systems: The states agreed to work together to identify a few high-value indicators they would like to develop, collect, and report on together, particularly indicators that can help capture the progress of students who start in developmental education. They also agreed to work together to make their experience and their perspectives on state data system improvement more broadly available to officials and advocates in other states and in national organizations. On March 8,

2006, data experts from the seven states will meet to begin the technical process of defining a viable measure of progress out of developmental education to college readiness and onto the college path.

Need-based financial aid: A panel discussion focused on strategies to help expand need-based aid for community college students and to tie aid more effectively to success. Connecticut officials described their success in increasing the take-up of federal financial aid as a result of improved technology and management systems. California's impressive campaign to invest state dollars at the campus level to improve knowledge about and support for financial aid applications was also highlighted. New Mexico's campaign to create a \$50 million trust fund for need-based financial aid was discussed (see below). And MDRC described the very promising results from a research experiment in Louisiana that tied financial assistance to persistence for students at two Louisiana community colleges.

Developmental education: States are experimenting with a range of approaches for using policy to drive improvement in developmental education. North Carolina, Ohio, and other states are grappling with

“We are always looking for ways to help our 50 community college districts secure resources, be more efficient, and become more successful.”

a decentralized and inconsistent set of cut scores for mandatory placement into developmental education. Others, like Florida and Texas, are responding to legislative resistance to “paying twice” for basic skills and interest in restricting access to developmental education. States compared policies on cut scores and placement tests, financing of developmental education, how state data systems track developmental education students, and other issues. The states agreed to work over the next six months to identify developmental education policy priorities that they will

address in concert as part of Achieving the Dream. Proposals will be discussed at the next state policy meeting in July.

State teams had a great opportunity at this meeting to talk with teams from the Achieving the Dream colleges in their states and to compare notes and exchange ideas with the expert coaches and data facilitators who work regularly with the colleges. There was widespread agreement of the value of and need for ongoing exchange with these groups—the Achieving the Dream colleges, as well as their coaches and data facilitators.

Viewpoint: Don Hudson, Texas Association of Community Colleges

Don Hudson, Vice President of the Texas Association of Community Colleges, has worked for the association for over a decade. Prior to his current position, Don served as Education Policy Specialist for the Texas Senate Research Center. Don is currently a Ph.D. Candidate in Higher Education Administration at the University of Texas at Austin, where he is completing a historical analysis of community college funding in the state.

Why did the Texas Association of Community Colleges want to become part of Achieving the Dream?

The association had never been involved in a national, foundation-funded initiative before Achieving the Dream. It is a new experience for us. We are always looking for ways to help our 50 community college districts secure resources, be more efficient, and become more successful. Achieving the Dream was a natural fit with our policy goals and an opportunity to do business differently.

What are the biggest benefits you’ve seen so far from TACC’s participation?

We’ve seen real benefits for the eight participating colleges. They are having different conversations internally—and with their colleagues in the other Achieving the

Dream colleges. Last September, when we brought all eight colleges together, I could see people following up with one another at the breaks, getting cards, trading emails. I saw the same thing at the recent Strategy Institute in Orlando. These colleges are doing brave work. They are looking at their data and are not backing off from hard conversations. That’s going to help them—and all Texas community colleges.

For the association, the benefits are huge. Achieving the Dream has enhanced our credibility with policymakers. We are not just coming in talking about “more money,” (though we still do that). We’re seen as being more proactive on issues that matter to everybody in Texas, the issues of the Closing the Gap initiative: increasing participation, particularly among underserved populations, and also giving students what they need to succeed once they are in our institutions.

There is another big benefit for the association—with our fifty colleges and their leaders. We are trying to find ways to take the experiences of the eight Achieving the Dream colleges to the other forty-two colleges in Texas. Colleges that are not in the initiative are asking: “What’s going on?” That’s very exciting.

“We are trying to figure out—as they’ve done in El Paso, for example—ways our colleges can help struggling high school juniors and seniors get ready for college, so they will be more likely to succeed in our institutions.”

What are some ways that TACC has changed since joining the initiative?

Here’s just one example. At a staff retreat last November, we were reviewing the role of our legislative committee. We realized that we did not have a formal mechanism for considering the concerns of member colleges that might emerge from their Achieving the Dream work and turning those concerns into legislative proposals. We changed that: now there will be a routine transmission mechanism from the colleges to our legislative committee and agenda.

I’ll give you another example. Achieving the Dream has focused our attention on several issues, one of them being need-based financial aid. As we went through the process of developing our priorities and work plan, we took a hard look at the data on financial aid in Texas. When our President Rey Garcia met with Commissioner Raymond Paredes of the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board and with two Deputy Chancellors, they had a long discussion about financial aid issues facing community colleges in Texas. Since then, the commissioner’s stump speech has included mention of the need for more financial aid for community college students, particularly for part-time students.

What do you see as the most important role that TACC can play in helping the initiative succeed?

We are playing an important role in bringing the colleges together and structuring their learning with, and from, one another. We give them an opportunity to share what they are doing and learning. We can help translate their efforts and experiences for others in the state—the other colleges and others involved in higher education practice and policy. If Achieving the Dream were only providing grants to colleges, a lot of good things would be happening, but their collective impact as a driver for lasting change would be limited.

What are the biggest policy issues facing Texas community colleges today?

Funding is always at the top of the list. The state of Texas funds 52 percent of district costs by formula. We will always be in there fighting for our share. As I noted, this year we are negotiating over the state share of group health benefit payments for college employees.

Two other issues have taken off in Texas. One is accountability and the accountability system. The state is looking to revamp and strengthen its accountability system for higher education. This is moving quite quickly: we are trying to make sure that community colleges are in those discussions and our commitment to student success is understood.

The other big issue is college-readiness of high school students and graduates. We’re going to have to get involved. We can’t just say, “That’s their problem, not ours.” We have to take a look at the developmental education innovations being tested in the Achieving the Dream colleges. We are trying to figure out—as they’ve done in El Paso, for example—ways our colleges can help struggling high school juniors and seniors get ready for college, so they will be more likely to succeed in our institutions. In a recent presentation to the staff of the Legislative Budget Board, what really interested them about Achieving the Dream was the focus on developmental education.

Any recommendations on how Achieving the Dream partners can be more helpful in Texas?

We are very excited about the support we’ve received so far: the meetings, the reports, the opportunities to learn with peers in other states. I am particularly impressed with the way we have focused on a few high-leverage issues across all the states: developmental education, data systems, need-based financial aid, alignment with K-12. For me, until this initiative, my job kept me in Texas. My sphere was the Capitol and the state agencies. Now, expanding it to include other states and the initiative partners—that is very helpful.

State Updates

Florida

New Staffer for Achieving the Dream: Cassandra Brown, a graduate student in Higher Education at Florida State University, has joined the Florida Department of Education and will be dedicating her entire time to the Achieving the Dream grant. Cassandra is currently coordinating Florida's mini-conference on diversity, Connections, being held May 25-26, 2006 in Tallahassee.

Cohort Study on High School Preparation and College Success:

Florida recently conducted a study showing the link between high school preparation and passing the College Placement Test. Another study followed a cohort of students from ninth grade through entrance into post-secondary education. The cohort was broken down into groups based on income. See the following links for the study reports:

<http://www.fldoe.org/CC/OSAS/DataTrendsResearch/DT33.pdf>

http://www.fldoe.org/CC/Vision/PDFs/PR2005_07.pdf

http://www.fldoe.org/CC/Vision/PDFs/PR2005_07_Appendix.pdf

New Mexico

Need-based College Affordability Act Funded: In 2005, the New Mexico Legislature passed the College Affordability Act. This is a new, need-based aid program established to encourage New Mexico students with financial need to attend and complete educational programs at in-state public postsecondary institutions. Because of the focus on the New Mexico lottery scholarship, need-based aid had slipped as a priority for higher education in New Mexico. (*The National Report Card for Higher Education, Measuring Up* gave New Mexico an "F" grade in 2004, down from a rating of "B" in 2000 and "C-" in 2002.) In 2005, following the recommendation of a Higher Education Task Force formed by Gov. Richardson, the College Affordability Act was enacted, with an endowment fund created in the state treasury, but it went unfunded. In the 2006 legislative session just concluded, the state decided that \$49 million would be allocated to the fund (pending the Governor's signature). The goal is to have \$250 million in the fund; until this goal is reached, half of the income from the investment of the fund will be applied to the corpus of the fund, and half will be distributed annually by the New Mexico Higher Education Department for scholarship awards of up to \$1,000 per semester. The funds are targeted to New Mexico residents with demonstrated need: returning adults enrolling at any time later than the first semester following high school or attainment of a GED, enrolled at least half-time (six credit hours) for eight semesters of eligibility.

Meeting our Mission 2006: The New Mexico Association of Community Colleges recently published the 2005-06 edition of *Meeting our Mission*, its annual accountability report to the state of New Mexico and its residents. This report on the accomplishments of the state's 18 comprehensive community colleges highlights increased enrollments, decreased

remediation for high school graduates, increased economic development partnership, increases in dual enrollments for the state's high school students, and improved outcomes on a range of performance based indicators over the last three to four years. The report is chock full of facts, figures, charts, and graphs. Past editions have proved popular with legislators, stakeholders, and advocacy groups.

Download from the New Mexico Association of Community Colleges at www.nmacc.org.

North Carolina

New Lead for North Carolina: Vonna Viglione, Resource Coordinator for the North Carolina Community College System, has become the Interim Director for Achieving the Dream in North Carolina. Dr. Keith Brown and Dr. Delores Parker continue as members of the North Carolina team.

Well-Represented in Congressional Community College Caucus: The recently convened Congressional Community College Caucus has a strong set of North Carolina ties, and on both sides of the aisle. Rep. Brad Miller (D) is Co-Chair, and Claire Lohr-Myers in Rep. Miller's office is staff to the Democratic members of the caucus. Sarah Rittling handles those staff duties for Republican members as staff for co-chair Mike Castle of Delaware. Rittling has a unique North Carolina Community College connection: her mother is the President of Davidson County Community College in Lexington.

College Goal Sunday: North Carolina has been accepted into the 2007 cohort of states that will sponsor statewide College Goal Sunday events. College Goal Sunday is a volunteer program that helps students and families who need assistance in completing financial aid forms, with a particular focus on helping low-income, first-generation families. Wanda White and Vonna Viglione of NCCCS traveled to Indianapolis recently to meet with the Indiana College Goal Sunday program and staff at Lumina Foundation for Education, which supports this national effort through the National Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators

Lottery Pays Off: News that North Carolina's new Education Lottery (which will provide more financial aid for students) will meet the "early start" date of April 2006 shared the headlines with news that a North Carolina couple, who sometimes travel across the border to Virginia for a hot dog and a lottery ticket, were the newest Virginia state lottery winners.

Ohio

Policy Summit on Career Pathways: KnowledgeWorks Foundation and the Kentucky Community Technical College System convened a joint policy summit in Cincinnati on February 23-24, 2006, on state policies to promote career pathways for adult workers. Superb presentations by

Dennis Jones of NCHEMS, Julie Strawn of CLASP, and Kay McClenney of the university of Texas Community College Leadership Program set the tone and direction for state conversations and planning sessions on how state policy can enhance efforts to build career pathways as a comprehensive model for improving the educational and economic transitions of traditional and non-traditional students.

For more information, go to: www.kwfdn.org/press_room/press_releases/press_release.asp?prID=129

Texas

Closing the Gap in San Antonio: On February 3, 2006, senior education, business, and community leaders met in San Antonio to discuss important institutional and community-level indicators and strategies that will help Bexar County close the educational gaps it faces. The meeting was sponsored by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board in partnership with the Association of Governing Boards and was supported by the Houston Endowment and Lumina Foundation for Education. The purpose of this first in a statewide series of “regional conversations” was to provide local leaders with the opportunity to interact and work together to begin developing a regional workplan to help sustain and improve the participation and success of Bexar County students in college.

Developmental Education Report Released: The report on developmental education best practices commissioned by The Texas Association of Community Colleges is now available. *Affirmation and Discovery: Learning from Successful Community College Developmental Programs in Texas*, by Hunter R. Boylan and D. Patrick Saxon, can be downloaded from TACC’s website: www.tacc.org.

Virginia

Two New Senior Staff for VCCS: Dr. David Gill has been appointed as Assistant Vice Chancellor for Institutional Effectiveness for the Virginia Community College System. The position assists the 23 community colleges in the planning, evaluation, research, and reporting functions necessary to monitor progress toward achieving the goals of the system’s long-term strategic vision, *Dateline 2009*, as well as working with the Achieving the Dream colleges. Dr. Gill joins the staff from San Jacinto Community College. Prior to his service at SJCC, Dr. Gill served for a number of years in higher education institutional research related positions in Texas.

Dr. Gretchen Schmidt will join the Virginia Community College System staff in the role of Director of Educational Policy. Dr. Schmidt joins the VCCS from the Arizona Board of Regents. Her significant experience in transfer policy matters will build upon strong transfer efforts already in place in the Commonwealth.

Legislative Amendments for Undocumented Students: The undocumented alien issue has been a point of contention in the last three General Assembly sessions in Virginia. In the current session, bills were introduced again to limit access to undocumented aliens. Additionally, bills were introduced to require out-of-state tuition for undocumented aliens who are admitted to institutions of higher education. Both bills have now been amended to afford access to students who: graduated from a Virginia high school; resided in the state for the last three years; and are pursuing citizenship status. The amended language represents a significant shift in perspective on the House side of the General Assembly. Virginia’s community colleges are credited with playing a significant role in molding this language.

SSNs for Student Tracking: Changes on the VCCS Web-based application form now accommodate the collection of social security numbers. The change is expected to help the VCCS track students throughout the system and into four-year colleges, as well as improve research and reporting activities.

Institutional Research Task Force: The Chancellor of the VCCS has announced the formation of a taskforce to develop a long-term plan for system-wide institutional research. The charge of the taskforce includes but is not limited to the establishment of common definitions and business practices, automation of required reports, integration of disparate data sources, development of a data warehouse, etc. The Achieving the Dream colleges are playing a significant role in the taskforce and expect to play a significant role in implementing any new policies and procedures that arise from taskforce recommendations.

Retention Workshops Go Statewide: Dr. Susan Coffey, policy specialist for Achieving the Dream in Virginia, is traveling the state presenting workshops on retention. These workshops include a simulation exercise in which participants play the part of students facing 18 typical incidents that might occur at any college (some positive, some negative). On the basis of these incidents, participants realize retention is everyone’s job—not just that of faculty or student services personnel—and that student decisions to leave college usually involve a series of incidents over time, most of them *after* the student enrolls.

Resources Related to Student Success

Resources from Achieving the Dream Partners

By the Numbers: State Goals for Increasing Postsecondary Attainment

Mike Collins, Jobs for the Future

When it comes to improving the outcomes of public higher education, do states know where they want to go and do they have a plan for how and when they will get there? State policymakers—and the public—want to know what benefits their investments in education are yielding: Are more students earning postsecondary credentials so they can support themselves and their families and contribute to economic growth?

By the Numbers, by JFF's Michael Collins, addresses an important state-level approach to assessing—and increasing—the value of public higher education: setting and publicizing clear, numerical goals for expanding student access and success. His report is based on JFF's 50-state survey of state higher education plans, which looked at which states have set numerical targets for enrollment and completion and how they set, measure, and publicize these goals to institutions, the public, and policymakers.

By the Numbers was prepared for *Double the Numbers*, JFF's national initiative to advance public policies that can significantly increase the number of young people who make it to and through college, supported by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and the Ford Foundation.

Download *By the Numbers* from the JFF Web site at <http://www.jff.org>

Making Performance Accountability Work in Community Colleges: Learning from England's Experience

Ozan Jaquette, University of Michigan

Ozan Jaquette, a doctoral candidate in education at the University of Michigan, has written a policy brief describing key elements in England's efforts to use performance accountability to drive improvement in its Further Education Colleges, the English equivalent of community colleges. While efforts to implement performance funding in the United States have yielded mixed results, in England the experience has been more encouraging. Success, defined as completion of a credential, rose 10 percent after reforms in funding and regulations were introduced, enabling the country to establish a performance-based, per-pupil funding system that is the centerpiece of a new accountability system.

Ten percent of total funding for these institutions now depends on student success, and colleges receive more money to serve and support underprepared students. Implications for the United States are highlighted in this careful analysis of the components of the funding formula, the dynamics of the regulatory framework and institutions, and their interaction with local college practice.

Download the report from <http://www.achievingthedream.org/PUBLICPOLICY/STATEPOLICYISSUES/default.tp>

Five States of Policy: A Brief on Policies and Policy Needs in the First Five Achieving the Dream States

Kevin Dougherty, Monica Reid, and H. Kenny Nienhusser at the Community College Research Center, Columbia University

This audit summarizes policies related to community college student access and success in the initial five Achieving the Dream states (Florida, New Mexico, North Carolina, Texas, and Virginia). This summary chapter of the in-depth study of all five states' policies looks at trends and patterns across the five states in areas that include: admissions, tuition, student aid, and other policies that affect access; developmental education, counseling and guidance, transfer assistance, baccalaureate provision, workforce development and other policies that affect student success; and performance accountability systems. The full report, including the summary chapter, is also available. Similar analyses for the two new Achieving the Dream states, Connecticut and Ohio, are under development.

Download from the Achieving the Dream Web site at <http://www.achievingthedream.org/PUBLICPOLICY/STATEPOLICYISSUES/default.tp>

Barrier Busters

The winter 2006 issue of *Lumina Foundation Focus* features "Barrier Busters," on community colleges and Achieving the Dream. As Lumina Foundation for Education President Martha Lampkin notes in her introductory message, the article cites the important contributions of community colleges and explores in detail the challenges confronting them. The article follows students at South Texas College and Virginia's Mountain Empire Community College as a way into the issues. Several pages explain and highlight Achieving the Dream. For single copies, see below. Multiple copies will be sent in the next few weeks to lead organizations in each Achieving the Dream state.

Download from Lumina Foundation for Education at:
http://www.luminafoundation.org/publications/focus_main.html

Additional Policy Reports and Articles

Data on Trends in State Funding for Community Colleges

An article in the excellent new higher education newspaper *Inside Higher Ed* reports on the historic erosion of government support for community colleges in the last 20 years. Reporting on a doctoral dissertation by Billy Roessler at the University of North Texas, the article includes findings such as these: In 1980-81, 16 states contributed at least 60 percent of the budgets of their community colleges. By 2000-01, none did so. In 1980-81, 22 states contributed at least half of the budgets for their community colleges, which enrolled 55 percent of all community college students in the country. By 2000-01, only 7 states—enrolling 8 percent of community college students—did so.

For the full article, go to <http://www.insidehighered.com/news/2006/01/16/cc>

Rigorous High School Preparation Strong Indicator of Post-secondary Completion

Completing academically challenging course work in high school dramatically increases the likelihood of a student earning a Bachelor's degree, according to a new U.S. Department of Education study, *The Toolbox Revisited: Paths to Degree Completion From High School Through College*, by Clifford Adelman. *The Toolbox Revisited* follows a nationally representative cohort of students from high school into postsecondary education and asks what aspects of their formal schooling contribute to completing a Bachelor's degree by their mid-20s. The universe of students is confined to those who attended a four-year college at any time, thus including students who started out in other types of institutions, particularly community colleges. The data for the study cover eight and a half years for degree completion—from high school graduation in spring 1992 until December 2000. The study concludes that the academic intensity of a high school curriculum is the strongest indicator of postsecondary degree completion, regardless of a student's major course of study. The investigation discovered that undergraduates who take more than a semester break from their courses were at great risk of not graduating at all, and those who did not start college within a year of leaving high school were far less likely to get degrees, but at the same

time, the freshman year of college was not the make-or-break predictor of college completion that many experts had thought.

To download, go to: <http://www.ed.gov/rschstat/research/pubs/toolboxrevisit/index.html>

The report is available in hard copy free of charge through ED Pubs: <http://www.edpubs.org/webstore/Content/search.asp> or 1-877-4-EDPUBS.

High Schools May Pay for College Gap

Texas education officials plan to ratchet up the state's accountability system by finding ways to hold high schools responsible for their graduates' college performance. The state already tracks student performance from pre-kindergarten through college. The next step would mean students who need remediation in college could hurt their high school's ranking under the state's accountability system. In December, Governor Rick Perry proposed holding high schools accountable for student college performance. Judging by college remediation rates, the tougher standards are necessary. Last year, the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board estimated that half the students entering the state's public colleges and universities needed at least one remedial course in math, reading, or writing.

For the full article, go to <http://www.mysanantonio.com/news/metro/stories/MYSA022306.1B.highschool.178cec8c.html>

Low-income Students Miss Out on Federal Aid

Even as the price of college rises, more low-income students who would likely get federal financial aid are not applying, according to an American Council on Education report. The report estimates that 1.5 million students who would probably have been awarded Pell Grants in 2003-04 did not apply for them. That's up from the ACE's estimate in a previous survey of 850,000 who missed out on aid in 1999-2000. A major reason is probably confusion over the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) form. The ACE study finds that the percentage of undergraduates completing FAFSA rose from 50 percent to 59 percent over the four-year period it studied, and the number of applications increased by nearly 3 million, to 11.1 million. But the number of low-income students who did not file rose from 1.7 million to 1.8 million, or 28 percent of low-income students.

To download the report, go to <http://www.acenet.edu/AM/Template.cfm?Section=CPA&Template=/CM/ContentDisplay.cfm&ContentFileID=1374>

Nominations Sought

Data Quality Campaign, a national collaborative effort to encourage and support state policymakers to improve the collection, availability, and use of high quality education data and to implement longitudinal data systems, seeks nominations for its Leadership Recognition Program. Awards will be presented to policymakers, data system designers, data directors, and others who take a lead in supporting, building, or using longitudinal data. Nominations are welcome. For more information, go to: www.DataQualityCampaign.org

Examples of Excelencia, supported by Wal-Mart Stores, is a new national initiative to identify, celebrate, and promote models, programs, and institutional departments that improve educational achievement for Latino students in higher education. 2006 nominations are requested in the following divisions: community colleges, baccalaureate granting intuitions, and graduate institutions. Honorees receive \$5,000 awards and recognition at the *Excelencia* Symposium; they are also featured in materials disseminated nationwide. Recipients will be announced in September 2006. Nominations are due by April 15. For more information, go to: www.edexcelencia.org/examples.

Upcoming Events

North Carolina African American Males in Education Conference

The conference will focus on strategies to promote student success for African-American males in North Carolina's colleges. The event will feature North Carolina's four Achieving the Dream colleges. Teams from all four colleges will attend, as will teams from other colleges around the state. The conference, co-hosted by the North Carolina Community College System and the North Carolina Central University, will take place **March 22-24** in Research Triangle Park.

Virginia New Horizons Conference

The theme of the VCCS New Horizons Conference, to be held **April 6-8**, is *Enhancing Student Success*. Several Achieving the Dream colleges will present overviews of their goals, activities, progress to date, and research findings.

Texas P-16 Conference: Partnering for Student Success

The conference, to be held at the Austin Convention Center, **April 24-26**, will combine the best of the "Recruitment and Retention" and "Seamless Transitions" Conferences. For more information, go to: <http://www.texasp16slc.org>.

Florida Diversity Conference

Florida is hosting a mini-conference on diversity called *Connections* on **May 25-26** in Tallahassee. The conference idea was proposed by the Achieving the Dream colleges, who suggested bringing in new speakers who could help developmental education instructors with strategies for working with diverse populations. The conference is open to all 28 of Florida's community colleges.

Achieving the Dream State Policy Meeting

Mark your calendars! The next Achieving the Dream State Policy Meeting is scheduled for **July 18-19**. The venue will be decided shortly.