

SPRING 2009

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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.



JOBS FOR THE FUTURE

88 Broad Street
Boston, MA 02110
Boston, MA
617.728.4446
WWW.JFF.ORG

In this Issue

Welcome to the Spring 2009 issue of *Achieving Success*, the quarterly state policy newsletter of Achieving the Dream. In this issue, you'll find:

- An interview with Robert Shireman, the Department of Education's Deputy Undersecretary for External Affairs and Outreach. He discusses the federal agenda for higher education policy, the role of community colleges in shaping that agenda, and how the U.S. Department of Education plans to work with states to improve student success in community colleges.
- Lessons from Achieving the Dream for the proposed College Access and Completion Fund. The fund, which was proposed in the Obama administration's FY 2010 budget, will provide \$2.5 billion in federal funds to states and higher education institutions for innovative approaches to implementing and evaluating college access and success initiatives. Achieving the Dream is currently circulating a discussion paper which includes a set of recommendations for the fund's design based on lessons learned by the initiative during the past half decade.
- An update on JFF's focus on developmental education policy. Beginning this summer, JFF will manage the state policy component of the Developmental Education Initiative, a new endeavor funded by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and Lumina Foundation for Education. Working with several early-round Achieving the Dream states, this initiative will highlight and scale up institutional strategies and state policies that can dramatically improve outcomes

for community college students who test into developmental education.

Additionally, JFF will soon publish a new policy brief detailing the critical role state policy can play in driving improved developmental education outcomes. In *Setting Up Success in Developmental Education: How State Policy Can Help Community Colleges Improve Outcomes*, JFF describes the multifaceted approach that Achieving the Dream states have taken to improve outcomes for developmental education students.

- Updates on recent policy developments and headlines in Achieving the Dream states.
- Links to useful resources on community college success and state higher education policy.

We are always looking for new subscribers and are particularly interested in reaching readers in state offices, two-year institutions, and education research and policy organizations. Please refer anyone you think should receive this newsletter (free, of course) to our new registration page on the Jobs for the Future Web site:

www.jff.org/register.php

If you have questions about newsletter subscriptions or content, please contact:

Jeff Wetherhold, jwetherhold@jff.org.

LESSONS FROM ACHIEVING THE DREAM FOR FEDERAL EFFORTS TO IMPROVE COLLEGE COMPLETION RATES

In his February address to a Joint Session of Congress, President Obama called for intensified efforts to increase degree attainment in the United States. Arguing that raising education attainment rates will sustain and enhance the country's economic competitiveness globally, the President pushed for substantial funding in the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 to stabilize state education budgets and to invest in state longitudinal data systems to better track student progression and success outcomes (see the Resources section of the newsletter for more information about these funds).

Another manifestation of the President's commitment to improving higher education outcomes is a provision within the FY 2010 executive budget for a federal-state partnership to help students complete credentials that can help them succeed economically. The College Access and Completion Fund is a \$2.5 billion federal proposal to help states, institutions, and individuals make innovation and the assessment of what works a routine part of their responsibilities.

The Achieving the Dream partners have circulated a discussion paper focused on this proposal that highlights the lessons learned by the initiative during the past half decade. The paper seeks to leverage the important work underway in colleges and states around the country to help make student success in postsecondary education an important national goal.

The discussion paper highlights Achieving the Dream's emphasis on institution-wide change and data-driven improvement strategies, which has served as a catalyst for significant improvement in community college student outcomes. The paper also outlines the integral role state policy support has played in the initiative as states have explored ways to alter resource allocation, rules, and procedures to be more supportive of colleges' student success initiatives. You can find the

discussion paper on JFF's website:

http://www.jff.org/Knowledge_Center.php

Recommendations for Federal Efforts to Improve College Completion

Based on the experience of the initiative, Achieving the Dream recommends the following set of design principles and concepts for the proposed College Access and Completion Fund:

Promote the Scale Up of Innovations that are Rooted in Broad Institutional Change Efforts

- The federal government should provide clear guidance to states that this initiative is primarily about the completion agenda (as opposed to access-focused activities).
- In addition, the federal government should signal to states and institutions that this program is designed to encourage bold and creative efforts to innovate at the institutional level in ways that can have a significant positive impact on persistence and completion.
- The federal government should specify, as it is doing in its current K-12 innovation strategy, a limited number of areas in which innovation and experimentation are to be encouraged, based on evidence of promising practices and significant gaps in knowledge.
- Colleges should have broad flexibility to use funds to experiment and innovate within a set of categories defined in statute. Examples could include: course redesign; program redesign that includes modularized learning, clearer pathways, and accelerated time to degree; improved student support systems; stronger data collection; and the use of financial incentives to students and financial aid policies to incent persistence and/or completion.
- The federal government should consider making grants in several rounds. The states that are most motivated and

prepared to implement should receive funding in a first wave of grants. A second and third wave would then enable less ready states to learn from the experience of the early round states.

- The program should encourage innovative efforts that engage more than one college and/or more than one state.

Promote the Expansion or Deepening of Research and Analytic Capacity at Both the State and Institutional Level

- The federal government should encourage comparability of data elements for reporting from colleges and states as the effects of their innovations. The Department of Education should recommend or require reporting of the set of measures that have been developed and refined by Achieving the Dream over the past five years in an effort to expand available outcomes data beyond what is currently required.
- Measures of improvement should be used, not absolute targets for increases in completion. Data on student outcomes should also be disaggregated by race and ethnicity, income, gender, age, and full-/part-time status.
- The program should ensure that states are able to retain a certain percentage of the state grant to build and deepen state-level capacity to collect the right data and to help colleges and others participate in a transparent and effective process of using data to guide improvement and maximize learning.
- States should be encouraged or required to help strengthen institutional research capacity in institutions that lack adequate capacity to design and deliver sufficiently rigorous research on their innovation efforts, since this is a necessary precondition for an effective systemic focus on credential completion.

Promote Rigorous Collaboration and Communication Among Colleges and State Agencies to Maximize and Accelerate Learning

- The federal government should require states to build into their efforts a learning program that creates opportunities for colleges to learn with and from each other and to look at the evidence emerging from innovation investments with an eye toward expanding what works and reassessing but learning from disappointing results.
- The federal government should use a small percentage of the funding to build the capacity of state higher education, university-based, or other independent agencies to organize peer learning and professional development opportunities for the state's higher education institutions.
- The federal government should consider reserving a proportion of the fund for national activities to accelerate and promote learning from the innovation activities funded by the initiative.
- Given the extensive and growing amount of private investment on this area, national activities efforts should be coordinated with existing and emerging student success efforts funded by non-governmental sources such as foundations.

There have been ongoing conversations between the Achieving the Dream partners and the Obama Administration about the College Access and Completion Fund. In addition the leadership of Lumina Foundation for Education, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, and many others have conveyed their own perspective on this new opportunity to improve student outcomes (see also a description of a recent report from the Brookings Institution on this proposal in the Resources section).

The prospects for this potentially powerful initiative in Congress are as yet unknown, since there will be pressure from both sides for the issue.

Q&A WITH ROBERT SHIREMAN

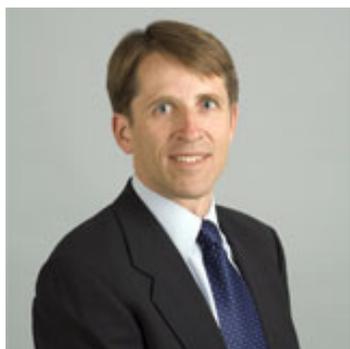
The Federal Agenda for Higher Education Policy

Robert Shireman is one of the most influential voices in higher education policy within President Barack Obama's Administration. He comes to the administration from the Institute for College Access and Success, which he founded and where he served as president.

As Deputy Undersecretary to Secretary of Education Arne Duncan, he is at the forefront of the administration's efforts to dramatically increase the number of Americans attaining a postsecondary education credential. He will play a critical role in shaping federal higher education policy in general and, specifically, the role of community colleges.

Mr. Shireman is one of the nation's leading experts on college access and financial aid. In addition to founding the Institute for College Access and Success, he has served as an education policy advisor at the White House National Economic Council, in the U.S. Senate, and at foundations and think tanks. Mr. Shireman has played leading roles in student loan reforms, the creation of the GEAR UP college preparation program, and the implementation of federal higher education tax credits. He served on the Federal Advisory Committee on Student Financial Assistance from 2004 to 2009.

Mr. Shireman was kind enough to speak with Jobs for the Future about the federal agenda for higher education policy, the role that community colleges have played and will continue to play in shaping it, and how the U.S. Department of Education plans to work with states to improve student success in community colleges.



Robert Shireman
Deputy Undersecretary for External Affairs and Outreach

“Working with states to improve completion is a critical part of our plan.”

As a newly appointed member of the Department of Education, can you speak to the Administration's agenda and goals for higher education?

President Obama laid out the bold goal for higher education of dramatically increasing the number of Americans who have college degrees. By the year 2020, we are aiming to ensure that the United States is once again the nation with the largest proportion of adults with college degrees in the world.

The administration's entire education agenda, from pre-K through college, is supportive of that overarching goal, and of the related goal of bringing our economy back. President Obama and Secretary [Arne] Duncan see education and training as key to the kind of innovation and productivity gains that will help to restore our economy and the world economy to a firmer footing. Our federal commitment to pre-K learning efforts; world-class standards in K-12 education; improved teaching; and encouraging more people to go into teaching, especially those with math or science backgrounds—all of those are in support of better preparing people for the workforce and for higher education.

When we talk about the federal higher education agenda, there are several very important elements: the larger and more generous tax credit for higher education that was included in the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act; the Pell Grant entitlement that helps to send a strong message to low-income families that college is something they should be aiming and preparing for; and making sure that loans are reliably available to all students who are eligible.

One of our key goals is a stronger partnership between states and the federal government. We see the funds that we have proposed—\$500 million a year for innovative state efforts around college completion—as absolutely necessary to achieving the attainment goal that we have set for the year 2020. It is not enough to get more people to go to college. If they

“We need to be thinking the way a behavioral economist thinks. What are the behaviors that, if changed, would improve student success, and what role can financial aid and other student support strategies play? What are the federal, state, and institutional policies that, either if changed dramatically or tweaked, could better support student success?”

are not completing their degrees, we are not going to reach that goal. Additionally, if we are not reaching out to our current adult population and providing them with the tools and inspiration to get degrees, we will also miss our mark. Working with states to improve completion is a critical part of our plan.

President Obama and Secretary Duncan have named several individuals with community college backgrounds to high-profile positions. Can you talk about the Administration’s view of community colleges in general?

With so many students coming through community colleges now, these students are still at the greatest risk of not completing a degree in higher education. President Obama and Secretary Duncan have really focused on bolstering our support of the programs that support community colleges. These include things like Pell Grants, which strongly support students at community colleges, and also programs that are specific to community colleges. More of those details are included in the FY 2010 budget.

Leadership is also very important. We need to have people at high levels in the administration who know community colleges. Martha Kanter is one of those—she has been nominated by the President to be the Undersecretary of Education. That would be the highest education position held by any former community college official within the department. That kind of appointment sends a very strong message about the importance of community colleges to our efforts globally.

The Achieving the Dream initiative emphasizes community college student success, particularly for low-income and underrepresented students. Given the federal government’s historic focus on access to higher education, can you talk about the role of federal policy in promoting student success?

We need to think more creatively at the federal level about how we leverage federal support in ways that promote student success. For example, we tend to see our financial aid programs only as access tools. These programs can also be tools for promoting student success. We can provide students with better

information about the way that financial aid might help them engage in their college education more effectively. We can help them take additional courses beyond the one course or part-time approach that they might have been considering. Both of those are strategies that, by incenting students to stay enrolled rather than stopping out, can improve success rates.

Financial aid is not the only mechanism to promote student success. There are also the advising, counseling, and other support services that go along with it. We need to be thinking the way a behavioral economist thinks. What are the behaviors that, if changed, would improve student success, and what role can financial aid and other student support strategies play? What are the federal, state, and institutional policies that, either if changed dramatically or tweaked, could better support student success?

The incentive fund for states is designed precisely for that purpose—to encourage states and institutions to try innovative approaches. States can use these funds to test whether, if they design things a little bit differently, it might improve overall success rates or success rates in particular courses, such as developmental education or introductory math and science courses.

Given your work in the Clinton Administration and with the Institute for College Access and Success (TICAS), can you talk about ways that financial aid can promote not only access but success as well?

I can only speak for my current role at the Department of Education. I don’t want to create any impression that I am speaking for TICAS. However, some of the ideas that we talked about at TICAS are certainly ideas that I bring here to the department. They are the kinds of things that states could try with the funds we are proposing.

From the federal perspective, we at the Department of Education should be looking at the information that we provide and making sure that we are incenting students to enroll in ways that are more constructive. Sometimes this means making relatively small changes. For example, when someone completes

“We really want to promote laboratories for improving student success in states and at institutions. It is not about creating a new program. It is about creating a learning system for what works and what does not work.”

the Free Application for Federal Student Aid today, they get back a notice from the Department of Education that tells them nothing about whether they qualify for a Pell Grant or whether student loans are available. That is easily changed and should be changed. In fact, it may well be that by the time your newsletter is published that will be changed.

Another shift that we have already made here at the department is to put out guidance from the acting Assistant Secretary for Postsecondary Education telling financial aid offices how to make a change in financial aid eligibility when someone has lost a job. Campuses have always had that authority, but there has not been clarity about how to do it. When there is not clarity, financial aid offices are understandably reluctant to make changes that might come back to hurt them in an audit. The clarity that this guidance provided should make it easier for campuses to acknowledge that, when someone has lost a job, their income has changed and they may now qualify for a Pell Grant or a subsidized Stafford Loan after all.

These kinds of changes are things that the Department of Education can do quickly. They are not heavy lifts, but they are little things that can make a big difference.

The administration’s FY 2010 budget proposal calls for a state-federal partnership to improve college access and completion. Can you speak about this specific proposal and how this partnership might work?

Well, we are working out the details right now. There are things we need to work with Congress on. We have received a lot of very helpful input from your colleagues and other organizations and institutions.

The Department of Education wants states to work with us and with colleges to test what is working and what is not working in promoting retention and persistence, especially for students who have traditionally not made it through to a degree. We want these partnerships to be very flexible in terms of the kinds of things that an institution, working collaboratively with a state, might try. They should include everything from a

change in the way counseling and support services are provided to a change in the amount or timing of financial aid.

Our basic goal is to learn from what is tried in the states, so there must be a strong evaluation associated with it. This should not be the kind of evaluation that always says that the program was great and everyone liked it, but the kind that gives us a sense of whether this is a cost-effective approach to improving retention. If it is, others in the state and around the country can learn from it. If it is not, then we can try something different.

We really want to promote laboratories for improving student success in states and at institutions. It is not about creating a new program. It is about creating a learning system for what works and what does not work.

That is right in line with the mission of Achieving the Dream. In the state policy component of the initiative, we work with teams of policymakers in participating states and are often trying to connect them to these kinds of conversations. How can they engage in this conversation in a way that is helpful to you?

I would say that some of them already have been engaged and have been helpful. They have helped us think through our proposal and brought us new ideas about how we can take the creative things that are already happening and help other institutions and states learn from them.

State policymakers’ engagement is critical to this process. We need to seed the field with knowledgeable researchers and practitioners who can help promote innovation and learning if we are going to make progress. We need to help campuses get beyond the traditional approach of getting funding to maintain a program regardless of what the data might show. We need to figure out how to be more effective with the money we have.

Developmental Education In Focus

Never has earning a postsecondary credential been more critical to accessing employment that provides family-supporting wages and benefits like health care insurance. The relationship between education attainment and income—once a little known data point referred to by education pundits and policy analysts—is now widely understood. Young people and working adults are acknowledging this reality by enrolling in higher education, particularly community colleges, at record rates. Yet in spite of this increase, 60 percent of the students who enroll in community college are not on track for success. This not only decreases their chances of ultimately earning a credential and securing family-supporting wages, but it also lowers the nation's education attainment rate, weakens our global economic competitiveness, and potentially compromises our quality of life.

The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and Lumina Foundation for Education have partnered to fund the Developmental Education Initiative—an ambitious investigation of institutional strategies and state policies that can dramatically improve outcomes for community college students who test into developmental education. The three-year initiative will support up to fifteen colleges and five states that have participated in the Achieving the Dream initiative's first two rounds. Building upon their efforts during Achieving the Dream's demonstration phase, the institutions and states that participate will develop specific approaches for improving outcomes for students who place into developmental education and have very high odds of not completing their educational programs.

Jobs for the Future will lead the state policy component of the Developmental Education Initiative. This work will focus on more deliberately supporting both institutional and state efforts to

improve outcomes for the large number of community college students who test into developmental education. The participating states will be selected by June 2009 and begin their work for this initiative in September. Their activities will include:

- Demonstrating the effectiveness of a state-level, data-driven approach in improving outcomes for students who place into developmental education;
- Identifying high-leverage policies that states can implement to support institutional innovation, reward improved outcomes for target populations, and provide incentives for students to move more quickly and successfully to credit-level courses; and
- Engaging and mobilizing key stakeholder groups and influential state-level spokespeople to support the state's commitment, plan, and implementation efforts.

Future issues of *Achieving Success* will highlight the activities of these states.

In conjunction with the launching of the Developmental Education Initiative, JFF will soon release a policy brief detailing the critical role that state policy can play in improving developmental education outcomes and getting students on track for success. In *Setting Up Success in Developmental Education: How State Policy Can Help Community Colleges to Improve Outcomes*, JFF describes the multifaceted approach that Achieving the Dream states have taken to improve outcomes in developmental education.

The states have focused on four key areas for state policy action:

Prevention: States can help prevent the need for developmental education by setting and broadly communicating college readiness standards, providing early assessment opportunities for high school juniors and seniors, and ensuring that high school and college entrance standards and expectations are aligned.

Assessment and Placement: States have a important role to play in the coherent and consistent assessment and placement of students into developmental education. A state's approach to placement assessment policy can ensure that students in need of intervention are served properly. Without it, those students might slip through the cracks and be allowed to enroll in college-level courses with little probability for success. On the other hand, an overly rigid placement assessment policy can result in student placement in developmental education in cases where enrollment in college-level classes and additional supports would serve them better. A balanced and carefully considered policy that avoids both extremes is critical to improving developmental education outcomes.

Experimentation and Innovation: State policy can foster or impede the kind of institutional experimentation that can help to ascertain what works in developmental education. The state's role in providing support and resources for institutions to innovate and test new interventions is critical. Weak evidence on what works in developmental

education, in conjunction with the large number of students enrolling in these courses and the corresponding expense of providing them, suggests that states serious about improving outcomes should redouble their efforts to identify new strategies and interventions that can improve student performance in developmental education.

Performance measurement and incentives: States have considerable influence over the performance indicators used to measure student and institutional progress, as well as the fiscal impact of state and institutional interventions. States and institutions should pay attention to intermediate milestones that are associated with an increased likelihood of successful outcomes. A greater knowledge of the relationships between intermediate measures and final outcomes can inform states' decisions regarding how to structure incentives to get students to and through those shorter-term goals. Further, performance incentives for developmental education outcomes can encourage institutions to work to meet state goals in this area.

UPDATES FROM ACHIEVING THE DREAM STATES

Arkansas

In February, Arkansas Governor Mike Beebe signed the Roger Phillips Transfer Policy Act, which guarantees an Associate's degree from one of Arkansas' community colleges will be fully transferable to any public institution in Arkansas for students who complete their courses with at least a C grade. Students who transfer with their degree will be guaranteed junior status and considered to have satisfied all of the general education requirements of the accepting institution.

Additionally, a proposed bill that would restrict the use of merit-based financial aid in public colleges and universities has received unanimous approval from both the Arkansas Senate and House

of Representatives, and is headed to the Governor for approval. Senate Bill 316 would reduce the percent of tuition and unrestricted funds that public postsecondary institutions can use for merit-based aid from 30 to 25, thereby providing an incentive for the use of need-based financial aid.

Connecticut

As part of the state's ongoing efforts to improve student outcomes in developmental education, Connecticut is currently conducting a series of evaluative studies to phase in common statewide placement standards for developmental education courses. The Connecticut State Legislature required that a statewide standard be developed during its 2007

session, and the implementation of this reform has been a critical component of the state’s Achieving the Dream work. Since then, state and institutional representatives have worked to align developmental education course curricula in order to pave the way for this reform. Once the standard is in place, the Connecticut will be able to track placement results in order to highlight high-impact interventions for students in developmental education.

Florida

The Florida Department of Education recently released the latest issue of its *Zoom* Newsletter: “Statewide Articulation Agreement—Effective and Comprehensive.” The report documents the benefits of Florida’s statewide articulation agreement, which guarantees that students who earn an associate’s degree at one of the state’s community colleges will be admitted to its public university system. The Department found that students transferring with their associate’s degree were 19 percent more likely to be admitted to the school of their choice than students who chose to apply directly. Additionally, they found that after enrolling these transfer students had grade point averages, course loads, and graduation rates that were comparable to those of students who started in the state’s four-year universities.

<http://www.fldoe.org/cc/OSAS/Evaluations/>

Hawaii

The community colleges of the University of Hawaii System recently completed its *UHCC Strategic Plan: 2008-2015*. The plan includes specific and measurable annual student progress and attainment outcomes for each of the system’s seven community colleges:

- The percentage of underprepared students who complete developmental classes and continue on to complete certificate or degree programs; and
- The percentage of Native Hawaiian students who complete certificate or

degree programs or who transfer to a baccalaureate-granting institution.

The inclusion of these outcomes measures in the system’s strategic plan was a major goal related to the system’s involvement in Achieving the Dream. The system will now focus on assisting campuses in updating and completing individual strategic plans linking these outcomes to specific strategies and methods.

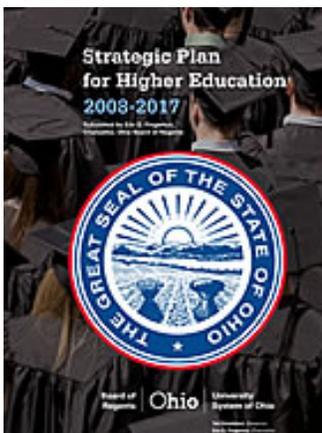
Massachusetts

The Massachusetts Board of Higher Education enacted a new comprehensive success measure for community colleges. The measure, which is much broader than the federal standard, counts students who have earned a degree, transferred, or remain enrolled and have earned a minimum of 18 credits. Additionally, the board requested and received dual enrollment funding for the Commonwealth’s public higher education institutions for the 2009 fiscal year. This reinstated state-funded dual enrollment, which had previously been offered from 1994 through 2001. As a result, the number of students participating in dual enrollment is estimated to have doubled in fall 2008, and it is expected to triple during the spring 2009 semester.

Michigan

The Michigan Community College Association is working with the office of Governor Jennifer Granholm and various state organizations to create a statewide, longitudinal, community college student database. Currently, each of Michigan’s community colleges maintains its own student data. Gov. Granholm has appropriated funds for establishing the functional specifications of the database, including linking the community college system to the state’s K-12 database, which is also in development. The association is also working with the state’s Center for Education Performance and Information to create policy on the state use of student educational data.





New Mexico

New Mexico recently took several steps to support improved outcomes for students in developmental education. The New Mexico Higher Education Department is working with external vendors to establish common statewide placement cut scores; the goal is to ensure that students are properly placed in developmental or college-level coursework. Also, a statewide Developmental Education Task Force has been organized to research the status of developmental education in New Mexico's colleges and identify best practices at the organizational, administrative, and instructional levels, including the alignment of developmental education competencies with related gateway course curricula.

North Carolina

The North Carolina Community College System regularly publishes *Data Trends*, a series of system-wide analyses of student success measures and institutional comparison data. The latest installment focuses on multiyear student retention rates across all 58 of the state's community colleges.

The system is also continuing to improve its data capacity. The fall 2008 semester marked the first time that college placement test data were collected statewide. These data will allow the system to monitor correlations among individual student course taking, completions, and success rates, and to use them to develop more responsive policies.

<http://www.nccommunitycolleges.edu/Reports/research.htm>

Ohio

Ohio Governor Ted Strickland and Board of Regents Chancellor Eric Fingerhut have given their support to a proposal to implement a new performance funding system for Ohio's colleges and universities. The new system, informed by the state's participation in Achieving the Dream, will include rewards for both intermediate and final measures of

student success as outlined in the Board's Strategic Plan. The new models, which are being debated in the Ohio General Assembly, would be phased-in starting in July 2009 for all two- and four-year institutions.

Oklahoma

The Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education influence by Achieving the Dream have established a goal to revise the state's mandatory assessment policy. The Regents are seeking to amend the policy to include standardized placement in developmental education and college-level coursework among public institutions. The state's academic vice presidents will review a proposal for a revised assessment policy at their spring 2009 meeting.

Pennsylvania

Pennsylvania community colleges are working to make sure that individuals affected by the economic downturn have an opportunity to further their education. Ten of the state's 14 community colleges now provide tuition waivers for workers laid off since September 2008. Students enrolled through these programs can register for any courses with empty seats the day before the first class. The programs, which have served 1,100 dislocated workers statewide to date, represent a unique model for providing postsecondary training for unemployed workers while improving the economic efficiency of the colleges by putting open seats to use.

South Carolina

The South Carolina Technical College System is playing a key role in that state's efforts to improve alignment between the K-12 and postsecondary sectors, as well as course transfer among the state's 33 public colleges and universities. The Commission on Higher Education, Department of Education, and Technical College System are initiating the South Carolina Course Articulation Project, a series of activities and programs designed

to improve alignment between secondary and postsecondary institutions.

Additionally, the Commission on Higher Education recently began working with AcademyOne, Inc. to develop a statewide Web portal for course transfer. The decision to establish a statewide system was motivated in part by increasing student mobility and the need to maximize the cost-efficiency of students' postsecondary education. AcademyOne recently worked with Pennsylvania, another Achieving the Dream state, to develop its statewide PA TRAC web portal for course transfer.

Texas

The Texas Association of Community Colleges (TACC) has made student success a major part of its priorities for the 81st Texas Legislature, now in session. TACC's appropriations request emphasizes community college's commitment to outcomes, including innovation, accountability, and improvements in student success. The request includes an incentive-funding component informed by Achieving the Dream. TACC cites the need for innovation funds, which can help support community colleges seeking to test new methods of improving outcomes for traditionally underrepresented students. It also seeks incentive funds based on measures of student success that hold colleges accountable for improving outcomes and reward those that demonstrate improvement.

Virginia

The Virginia Community College System has made great strides in promoting state-level conversations about student success in developmental education. The Council has established a statewide developmental education task force, chaired by a college provost, with membership that includes administrators, faculty, and K-12 representatives. This task force is examining current policies and practices related to developmental education in the system, and expects to

make recommendations for improvement in September 2009.

The Academic and Student Affairs Council also unanimously approved a set of recommendations made by a statewide placement task force charged with examining policies and practices around placement during the 2007-08 academic year. The Council has charged its student services subcommittee with developing an implementation plan based on these recommendations this year.

Washington

The Community College Research Center (CCRC) has issued its formal evaluation of the learning year for Washington's Student Achievement Initiative. The initiative focuses on systematically rewarding institutions for getting students to intermediate success measures that correlate with increased outcomes. The 2007-08 academic year was designated as a learning year in order to familiarize institutions with the new reward structure.

CCRC conducted a detailed set of interviews to assess the impact of this learning year on institutions. The evaluation found evidence of institutional efforts to collect new data and early evidence of efforts to implement new programs and innovations, particularly in basic skills and developmental education. While the colleges largely supported the initiative's principles and goals, the evaluation cites the need to increase awareness of it among legislators, as well as a concern among institutions that without oversight there may be unintended consequences in terms of institutional practices.

<http://ccrc.tc.columbia.edu/Publication.asp?UID=655>

RESOURCES

Featured Resource

Change Magazine Profiles Achieving the Dream

The January/February 2009 issue of *Change* profiled the lessons learned from Achieving the Dream to date. A series of three featured articles underscores the critical role that community colleges play in strengthening our economy and providing all students with a chance to succeed in higher education.

- Carol Lincoln of MDC, Inc., the lead partner for Achieving the Dream, focuses on how the initiative has worked to change the conversation on community college campuses to include a focus on student success, and to help create a culture of evidence.
- Susan Goldberger and Richard Kazis of Jobs for the Future discuss the limitations of the current federal measure of student success as it applies to community colleges, and discuss what the Achieving the Dream Cross-State Data Work Group has done to establish a broader, more inclusive measure of community college student success.
- Arthur J. Rothkopf of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce and the Institute for a Competitive Workforce highlights the importance of community colleges in helping our nation meet its goals for postsecondary degree attainment and workforce development. Rothkopf also stresses the importance of aligning our expectations of community colleges, stating that policymakers must acknowledge the range of outcomes their students seek.

<http://www.changemag.org/Archives/Back%20Issues/January-February%202009/full-achieving-dream.html>

Developmental Education

Achieving the Dream Commentary Highlights Successful Developmental Education Strategies

The April 24 *Chronicle of Higher Education* included “Helping

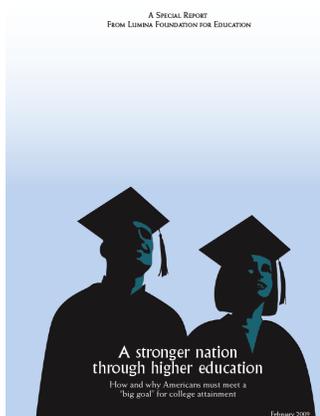
Community-College Students Succeed: a Moral Imperative,” a commentary by Kay McClenney of the Center for Community College Student Engagement and the University of Texas at Austin, an Achieving the Dream partner organization. She outlines the need to improve success rates in developmental education as the critical first step in improving community college student ultimate outcomes. She provides a five-question self-evaluation that community colleges can use to identify areas for potential interventions. McClenney then highlights the Community College of Denver and three Achieving the Dream colleges—El Paso (NM), Valencia (FL), and Patrick Henry (VA) Community Colleges—as model institutions that have improved student success rates in remediation through targeted strategies.

<http://chronicle.com/weekly/v55/i33/33a06001.htm>

Bold Proposal for New CUNY Community College

Driven by massive increases in community college enrollment over the last decade, the City University of New York is aiming to increase both its capacity and effectiveness by establishing a 5,000-student community college that looks like no other in the nation. While the proposed Manhattan-based college would be open enrollment, seats would be limited and awarded by lottery if applications outnumber them. Applicants would be interviewed in-person before enrolling, and students would have to demonstrate a set of behaviors that correlate with increased success rates in CUNY’s pilot Accelerated Study in Associate Programs. Those identified as needing developmental education would be required to participate in a four- to six-week summer session. All students would be required to enroll full time for at least twelve credits per semester and to complete extra math and literacy requirements in the first year. Additionally, the college’s programs would be restricted to a set of approximately a dozen concentrations in high-need areas. CUNY officials are





raising funds for the college, which they expect will open in two years.

www.nytimes.com/2009/01/26/education/26college.html?pagewanted=2&r=2&ref=education

web.cuny.edu/academics/academic-programs/programs-of-note/asap/About.html

Students Leaving Developmental Education Early and Often

Referral, Enrollment, and Completion in Developmental Education Sequences in Community Colleges, a report from the Community College Research Center, provides a set of findings on student pass rates for developmental education course sequences. The findings indicate that students fail to complete these sequences early and often. Fewer than four in ten students referred to developmental education complete the entire course sequence. Almost half of those who do not complete do not even make it through the first course in the sequence. Additionally, more than half of non-completers withdraw from the sequence because they fail to enroll in a course, not because they drop a course. The report recommends that community colleges focus on what happens before placement in developmental education, as well as on innovations that can reduce or eliminate the gaps in time between developmental education courses.

ccrc.tc.columbia.edu/Publication.asp?UID=659

Leveraging Technology to Improve Outcomes in Developmental Math

Technology Solutions for Developmental Math, a report from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, reviews strategies for using technology to improve student success in developmental education. Its findings are both promising and cautionary. The report's authors, Rhonda M. Epper and Elaine DeLott Baker, highlight the need to focus jointly on skill fluency and conceptual knowledge, though they acknowledge that technology has been used far more effectively with the former than with the latter. They clarify that the greatest promise is likely in using technology to increase the accessibility of courses and encourage student participation, and that

no technology-informed methods have been proven to improve knowledge and performance. Finally, they identify key obstacles to implementing technology-based interventions in the two-year sector, including the need for improvements in technology capacity and the importance of changing institutional culture as new practices are introduced.

www.gatesfoundation.org/learning/Pages/technology-solutions-for-developmental-math-emerging-practices-report-summary.aspx

Student Success

Lumina Foundation Places a Priority on Increasing Postsecondary Attainment

A Stronger Nation Through Higher Education, a report from Lumina Foundation for Education, maps out the foundation's goal of raising the national combined Associate's and Bachelor's degree attainment rate to 60 percent by the year 2025. The report details how economic changes have increased the need for a college education and how the benefits associated with postsecondary education continue to increase. While attainment rates in most other industrialized countries rise, our national rate remains flat and is increasingly threatened by participation and attainment gaps for low-income, minority, and first-generation students. Detailed state-by-state data on educational attainment support the foundation's agenda.

www.luminafoundation.org/newsroom/news_releases/2009-02-26.html

MDRC Study Reports Effective Intervention for Students on Academic Probation

Getting Back on Track: Effects of a Community College Program for Probationary Students, from MDRC, reports on the findings of its "Enhanced Opening Doors" program. MDRC worked with Chaffee College, a large southern California community college, to implement the program, which targeted students on academic probation. The study randomly assigned students to an experimental or control group. Those in the experimental

group were automatically enrolled in a “College Success” course on basic study skills, provided extra counseling, and required to visit the college’s tutoring and advisement centers. Student in the experimental groups were nearly twice as likely to be off academic probation within two semesters. They were also significantly more likely to earn a 2.0 grade point average and earned more credits on average.

<http://www.mdrc.org/publications/514/overview.html>

Virginia’s College Career Coaches Get Results in Local High Schools

The April 16 *Inside Higher Ed* profiled the Virginia Community College System’s use of career coaches to help high school students prepare for postsecondary education. Four years ago, the system started hiring career coaches and placing them in the state’s public high schools. The coaches work directly with students to help them assess their options and begin preparing for the academic rigors of postsecondary coursework. The program is yielding results in terms of enrollments: high schools with coaches assigned to them saw the community college enrollment rates of their graduates grow by 7 percent more than their counterparts’. The four-year-old program, which is almost entirely grant-funded, employs 110 career coaches who work in 140 Virginia high schools.

<http://www.insidehighered.com/news/2009/04/16/vccs>

Data Systems

Calls for Reforming Federal Measures of Community College Student Success

A recent article have renewed the call for reconsidering the federal measure of community college success, which counts the number of full-time students who earn an Associate’s degree within three years. “Updating Rules and Measures,” which appeared in the March 23 *Community College Week*, profiled the joint efforts of the American Association of Community Colleges, the Association of Community College Trustees, and the College Board in this area. The article directly references the Achieving the Dream Cross-State

Data Work Group efforts to highlight the federal measure’s failure to capture large segments of the community college student population, including those who are enrolled part time, who transfer to a four-year institution without a degree, or who remain enrolled and demonstrate significant progress toward earning a degree. Several Achieving the Dream states are profiled in the article as well.

<http://chronicle.com/weekly/v55/i29/29b01601.htm>

Renewed Support for a National Student Database

The creation of a federal student record database is the subject of much discussion, as policymakers debate the merits of centralizing data collection on educational progress and its potential risks to student privacy. However, a February announcement that the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation will fund the National Student Clearinghouse to link state databases on high school student outcomes post-graduation has raised the possibility that there may be an alternative way to collect these data.

While the chief purpose of this database is to provide information to high schools, colleges would also have access to data on their students’ persistence and graduation. The emergence of an alternative to a federally sanctioned database is welcome news to policymakers interested in better tracking outcomes for students who have highly varied enrollment and transfer patterns.

www.studentclearinghouse.org/about/news/release_2009-02-12.htm

Finance

Colleges Investing Less in Classroom Instruction

A report from the Delta Project on Postsecondary Costs, Productivity, and Accountability critically examines higher education revenues and spending—and concludes that students are getting less for more. *Trends in College Spending* summarizes findings from an analysis of 2,000 colleges and universities for the period 2002-06. The findings on revenues confirm what is virtually public



knowledge: public funding of higher education is down sharply, leaving students to cover a higher percentage of the real cost of their education at two- and four-year public institutions. The most alarming findings involve institutional expenditures. Over the five-year period, spending on classroom instruction declined among all types of institution. Further, this decline was most dramatic in community colleges. The analysis also found an inverse correlation between enrollment growth and spending per student, implying that more students attend those schools that invest the least in their classroom education.

deltacostproject.org/analyses/delta_reports.asp

Federal Policy

New Report Calls for Stronger Federal Commitment to Community Colleges

Transforming America's Community Colleges: A Federal Policy Proposal to Expand Opportunity and Promote Economic Prosperity, a new paper by the Brookings Institution's Metropolitan Policy Program, strongly advocates for a greater federal role in funding community colleges. The report's authors contend that community colleges are a cost-effective means to help reverse the declining rate of educational attainment in our country. They call for the federal government to double its investment in community colleges, citing their disproportionately low share of current federal funding relative to four-year institutions and their dependence on state and local funding as major risks to their economic well being. The report also calls for a national performance measurement system to inform federal funding, substantial improvements to data systems, and a federal commitment to devote half of the College Access and Completion Fund to the two-year sector to spur institutional innovations.

http://www.brookings.edu/reports/2009/0507_community_college_goldrick_rab.aspx

Summary: Federal Stimulus Resources

As the details on implementing the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act take shape, education policy organizations have begun to maintain Web sites with stimulus-related resources. Here are a few major sites of note:

- Recovery.gov is the federal Web site dedicated to projecting and documenting how stimulus funds will be allocated. The site will be the official archive as federal grant awards are made later this year.

www.recovery.gov

- The Department of Education Web site includes a page dedicated to the impact of the act on educational institutions. The page links to various fact sheets, presentations, and other documents that the department has posted since February.

www.ed.gov/policy/gen/leg/recovery/index.html

- The American Council on Education Web site's Economic Stimulus Resource Center links to a range of resources as well as slides from a February 23 webinar that ACE conducted in conjunction with the National Association of College and University Business Officers.

www.acenet.edu/AM/Template.cfm?Section=Government_Relations_and_Public_Policy&CONTENTID=31323&TEMPLATE=/CM/HTMLDisplay.cfm

- The American Association of Community Colleges Web site includes a detailed breakdown of federal funding for higher education, job training, and related programs through the act, including institutional assistance programs, federal financial aid programs, and workforce development initiatives.

www.aacc.nche.edu/newsevents/News/articles/Pages/031920091.aspx