Welcome to the spring 2010 Achieving Success, the quarterly state policy newsletter of Achieving the Dream. In this issue, you'll find:

- Information on two new JFF reports summarizing states’ progress in Achieving the Dream. Altered State: How the Virginia Community College System Has Used Achieving the Dream to Improve Student Success provides a powerful example of how one state community college system has leveraged participation in Achieving the Dream to make student success a central focus across all state. Good Data. Strong Commitment. Better Policy. Improved Outcomes. is an overarching summary of the policy progress and accomplishments across all the states in Achieving the Dream during its demonstration phase.

- An interview with Stan Jones, president of Complete College America (CCA). Launched in 2009, CCA advocates for college completion as a priority for state policy. Recently, CCA announced that 21 states have made formal commitments to working with it to increase completion rates in their colleges and universities as part of its Alliance of States. Over the past year, JFF has collaborated with CCA to share the Achieving the Dream student success policy agenda, and now JFF is working with CCA to coordinate on-the-ground activities in states where its initiative overlaps with Achieving the Dream.

- An update on the Developmental Education Initiative. This spring, JFF and the six DEI states finalized The Developmental Education Initiative State Policy Framework & Strategy, which will guide state efforts to improve student outcomes through 2012. DEI states also completed detailed work plans mapping out the specific steps they will take to improve student outcomes in developmental education. In this issue, we detail the outcomes that DEI states have proposed to achieve under the strategy’s first element: a data-driven improvement process.

- Links to resources on community college success and state higher education policy.

We welcome new subscribers, particularly potential readers in state offices, two-year institutions, and education research and policy organizations. Please refer anyone you think should receive this free newsletter to our registration page on the Jobs for the Future Web site: www.jff.org/media/newsware/subscribe

If you have questions about the newsletter, its content, or subscribing, please contact Chris Baldwin: cbaldwin@jff.org.
As our nation has struggled to deal with a deep economic recession over the past year, student success in higher education has taken on an increasingly important role in national conversations about educational and economic competitiveness. The issue is now at the forefront of local and national efforts to reform higher education. In response, more organizations are taking a hard look at how they can contribute to improving outcomes for postsecondary students—particularly those from nontraditional populations who are on average less likely to succeed than their peers.

Complete College America is one of the newer additions to the national network of organizations that place a high priority on student success. Launched in 2009, CCA advocates for college completion as a state-level policy priority. Recently, it announced that 21 states have made a formal commitment to working together to increase completion rates in their colleges and universities as part of CCA’s Alliance of States: Arkansas, Connecticut, Hawaii, Idaho, Illinois, Indiana, Louisiana, Maryland, Massachusetts, Nevada, Ohio, Oklahoma, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, South Dakota, Tennessee, Texas, Utah, Vermont, and West Virginia. More information on CCA, as well as an overview of the college enrollment and completion landscape in each of these states, is available on the CCA Web site: www.completecollege.org.

Over the past year, JFF has worked with CCA to share the Achieving the Dream student success state policy agenda, and the two organizations are moving to coordinate on-the-ground activities in states that are part of both initiatives. Achieving Success spoke with CCA President Stan Jones about this important new effort. Before forming CCA, Mr. Jones had a distinguished career working in Indiana, where he served as Commissioner of Higher Education, a state legislator, and a senior advisor to the governor.
What is Complete College America?

CCA is a brand new organization started last summer. We have a single focus and that is college completion. We also have a single point of leverage and that is working with states, primarily with governors but also with broader coalitions, to advocate for student success.

Several foundations are supporting the work, including the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, Lumina Foundation for Education, the Ford Foundation, the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, and Carnegie Corporation of New York. All of these funders have a common interest in college completion. We are now starting the process of working with states.

What is CCA’s overarching agenda, and what is its strategy for working with states?

We are building an Alliance of States that is focused on issues of college completion and increasing the number of degrees students earn. We have asked for commitments from the governors of those states in order for them to become part of the alliance, and we currently have commitments from 21 states.

In some respects, it is going to be a learning network because completion is an emerging issue. So CCA and these states are going to learn together and share best practices. We also have some specific commitments that we have asked states to make:

1. States have to set goals for additional numbers of degrees earned and closing the achievement gap. We think these overarching goals are critical.
2. States have to develop and set in motion plans at both the state and campus level for how they will go about achieving these goals. We have asked states to address some key areas in these plans, including remediation, time to degree, and new models.
3. States have to collect metrics from their campuses and aggregate these at the state level. These are not focused solely on the overall productivity issues of graduation rates and degree production but also on some of the key indicators of progression or “momentum points.” For instance: how many students successfully complete remediation and then move on; how many students accumulate 24 credit hours in the first year; and what are campuses’ semester-to-semester and year-to-year retention rates? We are asking states to collect this information so that they can measure progress toward their goals.

Given that SAFRA passed without the funds to support completion, what do you see as the federal government’s role in accelerating and aiding CCA’s efforts?

Last year, President Obama proposed the American Graduation Initiative and the College Access and Completion Fund to encourage more people to go to college and to complete college, with the goal of reestablishing our country’s attainment rates so that we can again be first in the world. I have to believe that at some point the Administration will take this up again. I don’t know when that will be or what the strategy is that they will put together, but I have to believe that the President is serious about this.
SAFRA had a lot of support, both from the President and from Congress, and was a victim of timing. I am hopeful that something will reemerge. It may not look anything like SAFRA, but it will address these issues. CCA would certainly be aligned with whatever the federal government does.

How do you see CCA interacting with Achieving the Dream and other ongoing efforts at the state level?

I think partnerships are very important. CCA has developed partnerships with a number of organizations, both in terms of overall approaches and state-specific strategies. We are working with the National Center for Higher Education Management Systems, the State Higher Education Executive Officers, the National Association of System Heads, the Southern Regional Education Board, and other national organizations that work with states. We were also very pleased to co-host a seminar on developmental education with JFF in October 2009.

Moving forward, we intend to work with a set of organizations on data and common metrics. We intend to partner with other organizations in states we will be working in. For example, we have had conversations with JFF about the states that are part of Achieving the Dream and that we are working in as well. Additionally, we will be partnering with another set of organizations on content work.

Achieving the Dream focuses on the two-year sector of higher education. Can you talk about CCA’s approach, which cuts across two- and four-year institutions?

That is an important distinction. CCA intends to work with both two- and four-year schools. Within the four-year sector, we focus on open-access institutions and regional institutions—those that are more likely to enroll nontraditional and first-generation students. We will work with private colleges and traditional flagship universities, but our real focus is open access institutions, both two- and four-year.

How do you see the current economic environment affecting CCA’s strategy and the ability of states to set and progress toward completion goals?

Interestingly, this has not come up as much as I thought it would. Across the country, there have been severe cuts to higher education. One would think that some of the response from the higher education community would be that they are so focused on budget cuts that this agenda will have to wait. We really have not heard that from anyone. I think there is a growing recognition that change has to take place, even in these difficult times.

In some respects, there may be a silver lining in that people are not arguing that the only way to fix this problem is to secure more resources. We certainly think that more resources ought to be available, but a lot can be done without more resources. I have been pleased that people have not used the current economic climate as an excuse for not moving forward.

Does CCA intend to reach out to all 50 states? How has CCA selected states thus far? Are you open to working with more states?

CCA is open and we are asking for volunteers. We do not have a strategy for trying to work with all 50 states. We certainly do not want to persuade a state to join if it is not serious about dealing with the issue of college completion.

We are a little overwhelmed that we have had so many states volunteer to be part of CCA. I anticipate that we will add another half-dozen states over the course of the next year, and I hope that CCA continues to grow over time.

Is there anything else you want to share with the readers of Achieving Success?

I want to emphasize that improving college completion is really an emerging area. There are some things we do know about what works, but on the whole the data are not very good. While we have some evidence of best practices, we do not have much evidence of best practices taken to scale. I think this is going to be a learning opportunity and a very collaborative effort.

“"I want to emphasize that improving college completion is really an emerging area. ... I think this is going to be a learning opportunity and a very collaborative effort.”

- Stan Jones
Data-Driven Improvement:
How Six States Will Change the Developmental Education Policy Landscape by 2012

Since the winter 2010 edition of Achieving Success, the six states in the Developmental Education Initiative have contributed to two new resources that provide a more comprehensive look into the underpinnings of their developmental education policy change strategies. First, JFF and the states have finalized The Developmental Education Initiative State Policy Framework & Strategy, which will guide the policy component of the initiative through 2012. Additionally, each DEI state has completed a state policy work plan mapping out the specific steps it will take to improve student outcomes by 2012. Both the framework and the state work plans are available for download on the DEI Web site, at www.deionline.org, or the JFF Web site, at www.jff.org.

The DEI section in the last Achieving Success previewed the three-part strategy that JFF and DEI states have identified to guide state efforts to support and drive improved institutional completion rates for students in need of remediation:

- **A data-driven improvement process** that enables the states to benchmark the performance of all their two-year institutions in serving low-income and minority students and to identify particularly high-performing colleges;

- **A state-level innovation investment strategy** that helps the states identify and align internal and external resources for the development, testing, and scaling up of effective institutional practices; and

- **Policy supports** that facilitate the implementation of new models and encourage the spread of successful practices by removing barriers to innovation and providing incentives to colleges to implement interventions that can deliver better results.

### Table 1. Performance Goals*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>Goal Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Connecticut</td>
<td>Raise pass rate for developmental education math from 47-51% to 60% by 2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Florida</td>
<td>For students not ready in math, 67% will complete developmental education math by the end of their second year of enrollment by 2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Carolina</td>
<td>Reduce the number of recent high school grads placed in developmental education by 58% by 2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ohio</td>
<td>Move from 75% of students completing their first developmental course in FY 2009 to 85% by 2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Virginia</td>
<td>Increase the success of students from underserved populations by 75% by 2015, according to the state’s newest strategic plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Texas</td>
<td>College readiness within 2 years or less by 2012</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*These are a selection of DEI state policy goals. For a comprehensive list of goals, see individual state work plans.
In this issue, we summarize what the six DEI states have proposed to do under the strategy’s first element: a data-driven improvement process. Every state work plan addresses all three of the following elements:

• Setting performance goals;
• Strengthening state-level data capacity;
• Increasing transparency of institutional and student performance.

Setting Performance Goals
Each state work plan includes numerical goals for performance improvement. These goals are intended to make the work plans appropriately ambitious and reflect the states’ commitment to improving outcomes. If the adage, “What gets measured is what gets done” holds true, Developmental Education Initiative states are holding themselves accountable for improving outcomes for students who test into developmental education (see Table 1 on page 5).

Each state’s goals reflect its respective policy and political contexts and past efforts to set goals. As the initiative moves forward, states have committed to tracking institutional performance on the intermediate and final outcome measures that were developed by members of Achieving the Dream Cross-State Data Work Group. This will enable states to set a baseline and establish performance goals for student progression through interim measures to completion.

Strengthening State-Level Data Capacity
In Achieving the Dream, each of these states made significant progress toward improving their capacity to collect and analyze data on student progression and completion. The states will continue to augment system-level data capacity to improve their ability to track outcomes for students who test into developmental education (see Table 2).

Increasing Transparency of Institutional and Student Performance
The six DEI states committed to increased transparency in reporting outcomes through more robust performance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 2. Strengthening State-Level Data Capacity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Connecticut</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Florida</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Carolina</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ohio</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Virginia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Texas</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
measurement. These improvements are critical to identifying what works to improve outcomes in developmental education. They also provide the foundation and accountability structure to hold states’ and institutions’ “feet to the fire” for achieving these outcomes (see Table 3).

By using *The Developmental Education Initiative State Policy Framework & Strategy* to build out robust data-related priorities in each of these areas, the DEI states have made a commitment to markedly changing their developmental education policy landscapes in a few short years. The process of setting these goals has required states to dig deep and engage state policymakers, leaders, and higher-education stakeholders.

The importance of this process cannot be overstated. Each state has made a commitment to developing and maintaining strong working relationships with key constituencies and fostering honest conversations among a state-level network of institutional innovators. As they work to meet the ambitious goals set forth in the work plans, DEI states will change specific policies and procedures. Equally important, they will strengthen the capacity of the state to support institutional improvement and continue to deepen the alliance of states and their institutions in pursuit of improved student completion.

### Table 3. Increasing Transparency of Institutional and Student Performance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Connecticut</td>
<td>Collect, share, and publish data related to student success from <em>Achieving the Dream</em>, particularly within the area of developmental education, making expanded data, findings, and recommendations available to stakeholder audiences ranging from the General Assembly and state policy leaders to workforce and economic development agencies, as well as for system-wide leaders, councils, and faculty organizations, to drive change and build support for student success.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Florida</td>
<td>Share state and institutional results for the <em>Achieving the Dream</em> intermediate and final measures with Council of Presidents, Council of Student Affairs, and Council of Instructional Affairs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Carolina</td>
<td><em>Publish Data Trends and Briefings</em> reports on DEI student success measures.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ohio</td>
<td>Produce an annual report detailing the performance by each of Ohio’s community colleges on developmental education success points and <em>Achieving the Dream</em> metrics. The report will disaggregate developmental education courses for each community college and detail the number and percentage of developmental education students who achieve the success points by subject and level of developmental education class in which the student enrolled, and by student gender, ethnic group, age category, and financial aid status.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Texas</td>
<td>Create annual public reporting of state and institutional progress toward momentum points and academic milestones that close the success gaps for underprepared students.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Virginia</td>
<td>Begin producing annual developmental education reports in 2010.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
For the first time, Achieving the Dream has recognized a set of participating institutions as “Leader Colleges.” The initiative has given designation to the twenty-one institutions that have demonstrated the most progress on the four core principles of Achieving the Dream’s institutional work: committed leadership; use of evidence to improve programs and services; broad engagement; and systemic institutional improvement.

Each Leader College demonstrated three years of measurable improvement on at least one of an identified list of performance measures and documented sustained increases in student success as the result of a targeted intervention. The Leader Colleges are:

- Broward College (FL)
- Coastal Bend College (TX)
- Cuyahoga Community College (OH)
- Danville Community College (VA)
- Durham Tech Community College (NC)
- Eastern Gateway Community College (OH)
- El Paso Community College District (TX)
- Guilford Technical Community College (NC)
- Hillsborough Community College (FL)
- Houston Community College System (TX)
- Mountain Empire Community College (VA)
- New Mexico State University-Doña Ana
- North Central State College (OH)
- Patrick Henry Community College (VA)
- Paul D. Camp Community College (VA)
- South Texas College
- Southwest Texas Junior College
- Tallahassee Community College (FL)
- Tidewater Community College (VA)
- Valencia Community College (FL)
- Zane State College (OH)
most learning communities, highlighting the need to scale up these initiatives and the scant information on effective ways to do so. A new series of reports from MDRC and the National Center for Postsecondary Research addresses this need for information. The first report in the series, Scaling Up Learning Communities: The Experience of Six Community Colleges, recounts three broad challenges the institutions encountered as they increased the size and potential impact of learning community programs:

- **Design and Management:** A common need for program management by a paid coordinator and college leadership; recruiting and supporting enough faculty members and choosing which courses to link together for students were also major challenges

- **Teaching and Learning:** A need for clarity and specificity in expectations, as well as robust support and training, in order to promote faculty involvement in the programs; the difficulty of implementing curricular integration across learning communities on a larger scale

- **Supporting Students:** A need to closely integrate support services with learning communities; the importance of the strong relationships that emerge among students in learning communities

A future report in the series will examine the results of a random-assignment study of the effectiveness of scaled-up learning communities.

**NCES Profiles Increase in Sub-Baccalaureate Degrees**


The National Center for Education Statistics released a new edition of its Stats in Brief series that highlights the rise in sub-baccalaureate degree attainment over the past decade. Changes in Postsecondary Awards Below the Bachelor’s Degree: 1997 to 2007 reveals that there was a 25 percent increase in the number of such degrees awarded from 2002 to 2007, and that female and minority students comprise an increasing majority of degree recipients. It also shows that community colleges continue to be the primary providers of these degrees, granting 58 percent of all sub-baccalaureate credentials (including 69 percent of all Associate’s degrees) as of 2007.

**Ivy Tech Program Receives National Attention**

http://chronicle.com/article/Experiment-at-Ivy-Tech-a65221/

As community colleges seek ways to serve a rapidly growing student population, one Achieving the Dream state will offer a faster pathway to an Associate’s degree. “Experiment at Ivy Tech: a One-Year Associate Degree,” in the April 25 Chronicle of Higher Education, profiles Ivy Tech Community College’s Accelerated Associate Program. The college will pilot the program over the next three years, with funding from Lumina Foundation for Education and the state of Indiana. The program’s curriculum is not new; rather the college restructured the existing curriculum to deliver it in a more focused period of time and to help students synthesize the information they receive. Ivy Tech hopes that the Accelerated Associate Program improves student success rates by decreasing the number of students who grow discouraged and drop out during a traditional-length degree program.

**K-12 Alignment**

El Paso Community College’s Approach to Improving Readiness

http://crrc.tc.columbia.edu/Publication.asp?UID=754

Collaborating to Create Change: How El Paso Community College Improved the Readiness of Its Incoming Students Through Achieving the Dream, from the Community College Research Center, discusses the results of El Paso Community College’s efforts to improve student readiness for college prior to enrollment. EPCC joined Achieving the Dream as part of the initiative’s original cohort in 2004. Since then, it has implemented a college-readiness protocol—a series of interventions undertaken in conjunction with 12 high school districts to prepare students for postsecondary education, reduce their need for developmental education, and help those that still need developmental education to complete these courses more quickly. Students in these districts receive training for and take the ACCUPLACER placement test. They review their scores with counselors and, if needed, they have opportunities to continue preparation and retake the test. When continued support is advisable, students also enroll in a summer bridge program. All students also get help in
completing a joint admissions application to EPCC and the University of Texas at El Paso. Between 2005 and 2007, the students who qualified as college-ready increased from 3 to 5 percent in math, from 30 to 35 percent in reading, and from 51 to 66 percent in writing.

Eight States Promote Early Enrollment in Community College Courses

www.nytimes.com/2010/02/18/education/18educ.html?emc=eta1

“High Schools to Offer Plan to Graduate 2 Years Early,” the February 17 issue of the New York Times, profiles a National Center on Education and the Economy program aimed at helping high school students enroll in community college courses beginning in their junior year. The program, which will be offered through select high schools in eight states, would not displace a college preparatory curriculum. Rather, it would create a set of tests that students could take at the end of the tenth grade and retake in subsequent years if they fail to pass. Students who pass these tests could immediately take community college courses and begin earning college credits.

The program is based on successful models in place in several European nations and Singapore. Connecticut, Kentucky, Maine, New Hampshire, New Mexico, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, and Vermont will begin offering these exams and early enrollment opportunities in fall 2011.

Data and Performance Measurement

A New “Vision” In Massachusetts

http://www.boston.com/bostonglobe/ editorial_opinion/editorials/articles/2010/05/05/ a_vision_project_for_higher_ed/

The Massachusetts Department of Higher Education recently unveiled a new initiative to improve the transparency of public colleges and universities, including community colleges. The Vision Project, profiled in the May 5, 2010 issue of the Boston Globe, calls for the annual production of publically available report in which Massachusetts is compared with other states on a set of seven performance measures:
• College-going rates of high school graduates
• Rates of college graduation and student-success
• Graduates in key workforce fields

• Results of campus and national assessments of learning
• Progress in closing gaps in achievement between demographic groups
• Research spending levels
• Licensing income levels

The student success portion of the performance measures has been directly influenced by Massachusetts’ participation in Achieving the Dream. The Vision Project’s annual reports will include measures of community college student progression and outcomes identified from the state’s experience in the initiative.

AACC Advocates for Better Links Between Education and Workforce Data

www.aacc.nche.edu/Publications/Briefs/Pages/ rb03162010.aspx

A report from the American Association of Community Colleges argues that, in order to hold community colleges appropriately accountable for student outcomes, there need to be stronger links between the data they gather on student progression and data on workforce participation. Moving Success from the Shadows: Data Systems That Link Education and Workforce Outcomes looks at how existing data systems are aligned with assumptions made in federal legislation, as well as at what data current systems collect. The authors see a need to improve practices in both areas and note several shortcomings of existing systems, including the failure of workforce data systems to capture self-employed individuals and limited institutional access to workforce data on federal employees. They highlight three policy areas need to be addressed to establish more effectively linked data systems:
• Facilitating the development of longitudinal data systems in the postsecondary sector;
• Improving colleges’ access to workforce data; and
• Collecting more comprehensive data on the workforce outcomes across state and federal agencies.

National Progress Seen on Student Data Systems

www.dataqualitycampaign.org/resources/846

In January, the Data Quality Campaign released Inaugural Overview of States’ Actions to Leverage Data to Improve Student Success. The DQC has worked since 2005 to support the development of statewide longitudinal student data systems. The report is structured around ten essential
elements identified for these systems and ten action steps for effective data use at the state level. The results from state surveys are mixed. States have clearly made progress implementing the essential elements: twelve states have implemented all ten, and all but two states have implemented at least six. However, most states have not adopted the action steps recommended by the campaign. Only two states have implemented six or more actions, and forty-three have implemented three or fewer. The full report and supplementary analyses of the survey results are available on the DQC Web site.

Finance

Annual Report on Higher Education Finance

www.sheeo.org/Finance/shef-home.htm

The State Higher Education Executive Officers’ latest State Higher Education Finance Report covers the fiscal year 2009. The report includes information on state and local support for higher education, as well as statewide enrollment and tuition trends. As expected, the recession has had a significant impact on support for higher education. State and local support decreased from 2008-09, while the share of total revenue attributable to tuition at public colleges and universities increased. The report provides information on states’ use of federal stimulus funds for higher education: during the fiscal year 2009, 16 states used these funds to compensate at least in part for reduced state funding. This installment of the report also takes advantage of SHEEO’s new partnership with the Grapevine survey of state appropriations, managed by the Illinois State University Center for the Study of Education Policy.

Transfer and Articulation

New Online Transfer Resource Matches Students with Schools

www.collegefish.org

Community college students who wish to transfer to a four-year college have a new online tool. Phi Theta Kappa, an international honor society for community college students, sponsors CollegeFish.org. The primary feature the Web site is matching community college students with appropriate four-year institutions. Students input a variety of information about academic interests and performance, scheduling needs, and financial and geographic constraints, and the Web site provides with lists of four-year institutions meeting those particular needs and contact information for student services staff. It also provides tools to help students with scholarship searches, admissions deadlines, and financial-aid applications, as well as. CollegeFish.org is currently being tested by Mississippi’s 15 community colleges, but it is open to the public and will be available free of charge to all community colleges after the test phase.

California Issues Guidelines for Improved Transfer


In 2009, the University of California, California State University, and California Community College systems commissioned a joint task force to address the challenge of making sure that students in all three systems can readily transfer among institutions and succeed after doing so. On March 8, 2010, the task force issued its recommendations. These are not meant to be an exhaustive list of recommendations for improvement but rather a set of next steps that are implementable in the current budget environment. The recommendations are:

- All three systems share messaging on transfer as a viable pathway for postsecondary education.
- All three systems commit to California’s Articulation System Stimulating Inter-Institutional Student Transfer.
- All three systems commit to the C-ID Project, a community college-funded initiative that provides faculty with a forum to participate in common course descriptions and numbering.
- All three systems commit to the Lower Division Transfer Preparation, which facilitates access to a baccalaureate degree by identifying community college courses that will be accepted on four-year campuses.
- The state implements the California Community College Early Assessment Program.
- All three systems explore opportunities for expanding distance education.
- The three systems create common academic calendars.