Achieving the Dream Colleges in Pennsylvania and Washington State

Early Progress Toward Building a Culture of Evidence

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Overview

In 2003, Lumina Foundation for Education launched a bold, multiyear, national initiative called *Achieving the Dream: Community Colleges Count*, to help students stay in school and succeed. The initiative is focused particularly on students who have faced the most barriers to success, including low-income students and students of color. Initially, 27 colleges in five states joined the initiative; there are now over 80 institutions in 15 states.

Participating colleges commit to using data to improve programs and services in ways that lead to increased student success — a process known as "building a culture of evidence." Specifically, colleges mine transcripts and gather other information to understand how students are faring over time and which groups need the most assistance. Based on a diagnosis of the problems in student achievement, they design and implement strategies to improve academic outcomes. Participating colleges receive a $50,000 planning grant followed by a four-year $400,000 implementation grant, along with assistance from coaches hired by the initiative. This report describes the progress made by the 13 Pennsylvania and Washington State community colleges that comprise Round 3 of the Achieving the Dream initiative after planning and one year of implementation. The key findings are:

- **The average institutional rates for Pennsylvania and Washington colleges on most of the baseline performance measures were low,** and there was greater variation among colleges within the two states than between them.
- **There was widespread support among college leaders and other personnel for the Achieving the Dream goals and principles**, which were seen as consistent with college goals and accreditation and state accountability requirements.
- **All 13 colleges used an analysis of their college's data as the primary means of identifying gaps in student achievement**, and all used both qualitative and quantitative data to identify and prioritize problems areas.
- **The strategies developed by the colleges focused on four areas**: developmental education, supplemental instruction, a first-year student success course, and better organized and more intensive advising.
- **Four colleges were beginning to institutionalize a culture of evidence, and another four had made promising progress after the first year of implementation**. Five had made little or only limited progress.
- **Achieving the Dream had positive effects on all of the 13 Pennsylvania and Washington State colleges**, which as a group were further along a year and a half into

the process than were the colleges that joined the initiative two years earlier in the first round.

The findings from this study will be compared with follow-up research that CCRC and MDRC will conduct in two years to evaluate the progress of the colleges at the end of the five-year project period.

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Preface

With their open admission policies, convenient locations, and low tuition, community colleges are a critical resource for millions of adults who might otherwise be unable to go to college. For low-income people in particular, these colleges offer a pathway out of poverty and into better jobs. Yet nearly half of all students who begin at community colleges do not transfer to a four-year college or complete a certificate or degree program within eight years of initial enrollment.

Can community colleges make better use of data to improve student outcomes? That is the fundamental idea behind *Achieving the Dream: Community Colleges Count*, a bold initiative launched in 2003 by Lumina Foundation for Education to help community college students succeed — particularly low-income students and students of color, who have traditionally faced the most barriers to success. Today, Achieving the Dream includes over 80 colleges in 15 states, supported by 7 partner organizations and 21 funders in addition to Lumina. The initiative's central focus is to help community colleges use what they learn from data on student outcomes to develop new programs and policies — and to generate long-term institutional change. Achieving the Dream provides a way for colleges to engage in thoughtful self-assessment and reflection on how they can serve students better.

This report, a coproduction of the Community College Research Center (CCRC) at Columbia University's Teachers College and MDRC, presents the findings from baseline evaluation research on the 13 colleges that comprise the third round of the Achieving the Dream initiative. Findings focus on the initial efforts of seven Pennsylvania and six Washington State community colleges to build a culture of evidence for student success and, more specifically, on their work to increase the equity of achievement among students by race and ethnicity or by income. The report also compares the Pennsylvania and Washington State colleges with the first 27 community colleges that joined the initiative.

This report reflects the implementation to date by the Pennsylvania and Washington colleges early on in a five-year process. We will continue to investigate whether and how colleges make changes in their organizational culture and practices to serve students more effectively, examining especially whether outcomes improve on such critical measures as the rates of students who complete developmental education courses and who persist from semester to semester.

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Executive Summary

Introduction

Traditionally, community colleges have played a vital role in American society by expanding access to a college education for millions of Americans. In recent years, community college educators, under pressure from government agencies, accreditation agencies, and students themselves, have begun to pay more attention to what happens to students once they enter college and to take steps to increase the rates at which community college students earn college credentials and transfer to baccalaureate institutions.

The Achieving the Dream Initiative

One of the most important initiatives in this shift in community college attention from access to access *and* success is Achieving the Dream, a national initiative involving more than 80 colleges in 15 states. The initiative seeks to help more community college students succeed and is particularly concerned about students of color and low-income students, who traditionally have faced significant barriers to success. Whereas most efforts to improve community college student success involve specific programmatic interventions, Achieving the Dream is based on the premise that to improve outcomes for students on a substantial scale, colleges need to change how they do business in fundamental ways. Specifically, colleges should create a "culture of inquiry and evidence" in which decisions about the design, delivery, and funding of programs and services are made based on evidence of what works to improve student outcomes. Colleges that operate in this way adhere to four principles: (1) Committed leadership; (2) Use of evidence, specifically data on student progression and outcomes, to improve programs and services; (3) Broad engagement of administrators, faculty, staff, and students in efforts to promote student success; and (4) Systemic institutional improvement.

Achieving the Dream recommends that colleges transform themselves according to these principles and thereby build a culture of evidence through a five-step process: (1) Commit to improving student outcomes; (2) Use longitudinal student cohort data and other evidence to identify and prioritize problems in student achievement; (3) Engage faculty, staff, and other internal and external stakeholders in developing strategies for addressing priority problems; (4) Implement, evaluate, and improve strategies; and (5) Institutionalize continuous improvement of programs and services through program review, planning, and budgeting processes driven by evidence of what works best for students.

Achieving the Dream expects that by following this institutional transformation process, colleges will be able continuously improve rates of student success, including increased course pass rates, persistence, and, ultimately, credential attainment.

Achieving the Dream provides both financial and technical support to help colleges undertake this process. The financial support includes a one-year planning grant and implementation funding over four years that colleges can use to support data collection and analysis, engagement of faculty and staff, and implementation of improvement strategies. The technical support includes two outside consultants — a coach (usually a former community college president) and a data facilitator (usually a community college institutional researcher) — who advise the college on how to analyze its data on student success, interpret and communicate the findings to faculty and staff, and use the information to make improvements in college programs and services.

The Round 3 Colleges

Thirteen colleges, seven in Pennsylvania (PA) and six in Washington (WA) State, joined Achieving the Dream in 2006 in the third round of entering colleges (Table ES.1). All of them participated in a planning year that included a Kickoff Institute in July 2006 and produced proposals that were accepted for four years of implementation funding.

Table ES.1

Achieving the Dream Colleges in Pennsylvania and Washington State

Selected Characteristics, Academic Year 2005-06

College	Enrollment (FTE)	Minority Enrollment (%)	Pell Recipients (%)
Pennsylvania			
Allegheny County	12,443	28	34
Beaver County	1,886	20	37
Delaware County	3,664	29	21
Montgomery	5,684	31	18
Northampton	4,525	22	23
Philadelphia	13,542	68	54
Westmoreland	4,116	11	40
Washington State			
Big Bend	1,464	29	44
Highline	4,635	48	18
Renton Technical	2,782	51	27
Seattle Central	4,912	47	21
Tacoma	5,064	39	30
Yakima	3,592	38	40

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS).

The Evaluation

The Community College Research Center (CCRC) and MDRC conducted baseline evaluation research to examine efforts by the 13 Achieving the Dream colleges in Pennsylvania and Washington to begin implementing the initiative's institutional improvement process during the planning and first implementation year. Specifically, the researchers sought to determine the following: what was the performance of the colleges at baseline; how closely the colleges followed the improvement process recommended by Achieving the Dream; what student success strategies the colleges were implementing and what were the results to date; how much progress the colleges made in building a culture of evidence; what effects Achieving the Dream had on the colleges early on in the initiative; and, finally, how the colleges and the initiative more generally can improve the impact of their efforts moving forward.

Findings based on extensive on-site interviews with personnel at all 13 colleges, a survey of data use by faculty and administrators at these colleges, and an analysis of data on the performance of the colleges in the period before they joined the initiative are presented below. Findings for the PA and WA colleges are compared with each other and with findings from a baseline evaluation of the 27 colleges that joined the initiative in the first round, which was also conducted by CCRC and MDRC. The findings from this study will be compared with follow-on research that CCRC and MDRC plan to conduct in two years to see what progress the PA and WA colleges have made by the end of their five-year project period.

The Baseline Performance of the Pennsylvania and Washington Colleges

At the beginning of the initiative, Achieving the Dream established five main performance indicators, with specific student achievement measures for each, for participating colleges. To establish the baseline performance of the PA and WA colleges on the Achieving the Dream measures, we calculated the average performance of the PA and WA colleges on each measure for the three-year period before each college joined Achieving the Dream using data on cohorts of first-time, degree-seeking students that the colleges participating in Achieving the Dream are required to report to a national database maintained by the initiative.

The average institutional rates for PA and WA colleges on most of the baseline performance measures were low, as they were for the Round 1 colleges. Interestingly, while there was variation in the average performance rates for WA, PA, and Round 1 colleges on all of the Achieving the Dream measures, there was often more substantial variation within these three groups than among them.

Course Completion

- ***Developmental courses***. PA colleges had a higher average rate of successful completion for developmental instruction in all three subjects (math, English, and reading) than WA colleges. PA college rates did not vary as widely as in WA, however. Both PA and WA colleges had higher average rates of completion for developmental English than did Round 1 colleges, but Round 1 colleges had a higher completion rate than both PA and WA in developmental reading.

- ***Gatekeeper courses***. Rates of completion of the first college-level "gatekeeper" courses in math and English are important because passing these courses is associated with a higher likelihood of earning college degrees and transferring. PA and WA colleges had higher average rates of completion in gatekeeper English courses than they did in college-level math courses, and the average rates at which students completed gatekeeper English were higher for students who were referred to developmental instruction than for students who were not. Both PA and WA colleges had higher average rates of completion in both math and English gatekeeper courses than did Round 1 colleges.

- ***Overall course completion***. The average course completion rates for PA, WA, and Round 1 colleges were very similar, slightly more 75 percent, but PA colleges had a much larger range in variation than WA colleges.

Persistence and Credential Completion

- ***Persistence over three years***. As would be expected, the average rates of persistence decreased as the period of time from initial enrollment increased. WA colleges had the highest percentage of students persisting across the three measured periods of time; moreover, as time passed, the gap between WA colleges' rates of persistence and both PA and Round 1 colleges' rates of persistence increased.

- ***Credential completion***. PA colleges' average rate of credential completion closely matched the Round 1 colleges, while WA's average rate was higher. WA also had higher rates of obtaining an associate degree within three years than did either the PA or Round 1 colleges.

Pell Status

WA exhibited higher average rates of completion within three years for both Pell recipients — low-income students who receive federal needs-based grants — and non-recipients than did PA and Round 1 colleges. Consistent with Round 1 colleges, rates of persistence for PA and WA colleges were higher for Pell recipients than non-recipients. This may stem in part from the fact that Pell Grant recipients are encouraged to attend college full-time and full-time students are not surprisingly more likely to graduate than part-time ones. Pell recipient rates of credential completion were low for all three groups, however.

Race and Ethnicity

The average institutional rates for successful completion of developmental and gatekeeper courses were lower for African-Americans, Hispanics, and Native Americans than for whites, with PA colleges having more gaps on these measures than WA colleges. In PA, all of the minority groups had lower average rates than whites for completion of gatekeeper math and English courses. In WA, Asians, African-Americans, Hispanics, and Native Americans all had higher rates of completion in gatekeeper English, though not in math, than whites. Across both PA and WA colleges, the rates at which students completed courses generally were lower for African-Americans, Hispanics, and Native Americans than for whites — a gap also present among the Round 1 colleges.

Patterns of Data Use by Faculty

In late 2008, CCRC and MDRC conducted a survey to identify patterns of data use by faculty and administrators at the Achieving the Dream colleges. The main findings are summarized below.

Extent of Data Use

Overall, a surprisingly high proportion of faculty in the PA, WA, and Round 1 colleges regularly used data on student outcomes, although there were variations across and within colleges on the types of data used most often.

- ***Frequency***. At least once a year, about half of the faculty across all the Achieving the Dream colleges used data on placement test scores, retention rates, or graduation rates, and used measures of student learning other than grades, although over a third never used such measures.
- ***Teaching-related decisions***. The majority of faculty surveyed used data and research at least to some extent in decisions related to teaching. Around one

in five indicated that they were a heavy user of data and research for teaching decisions.

- ***Consideration of student achievement gaps***. Nearly one in three faculty respondents never reviewed data on student achievement gaps among different student groups, although WA college faculty reviewed such data more frequently than their PA counterparts, possibly because their students included a higher proportion of minorities. Faculty at the PA and WA colleges were significantly more likely than those at Round 1 colleges to indicate that they participated frequently in organized discussions about improving the academic performance of students of color.

- ***Academic department decisions***. Most faculty indicated that their departments used data and research for programmatic decisions at least to some extent, and the departments of approximately one fourth were heavy users of data. However, the frequency with which faculty in the PA, WA, and Round 1 colleges used data for decision making varied by department, with those in general education on average less likely to use data on student outcomes in their work, while faculty in developmental and for-credit occupational programs were more frequent users of data and research.

- ***Effect of departmental vs. college-wide practices.*** Interestingly, we found a much stronger relationship between data use by individual faculty and the extent to which their department used data on students for decision making than between faculty data use and the extent to which the college overall used data on student outcomes to evaluate programs and make decisions at the leadership level. Hence, commitment by top college leaders to data-based decision making and a data-oriented approach to institutional management may not be sufficient to encourage faculty to become more data oriented in practice. Additional efforts at the department level are probably needed to change faculty behavior.

Accessibility of Data and Training in Its Use

A majority of faculty at the PA, WA, and Round 1 colleges indicated that they were able to access information they needed in a timely manner and that the information they received was accurate, although faculty from the WA colleges were less satisfied with their access to data, possibly because of the problems that the WA community and technical colleges had retrieving data from the legacy information system they shared.

- ***Methods of data retrieval***. Faculty indicated that they used a variety of sources or methods to get information on groups of students. WA college faculty were significantly less likely than PA and Round 1 faculty to do searches themselves using their college's student information system or their college's website or fact book because of retrieval problems.

- ***Support from the institutional research staff***. Faculty at about half of the PA and Round 1 colleges indicated that their college's institutional research (IR) function was adequately staffed to meet the demand for information, compared with a third of WA college faculty. PA college faculty were significantly more likely than those in WA and Round 1 colleges to indicate that their college's institutional research staff was responsive to requests for information. At least some colleges had trouble recruiting qualified IR staff.

- ***Perceived barriers to use***. Around a third of the faculty at the PA, WA, and Round 1 colleges indicated that one reason that they did not use data and research was that they were too busy with their teaching responsibilities. Most faculty, however, indicated that using data and research on students was part of their responsibility and that they had the skills needed to analyze data. About a fourth of faculty said that the data available were not relevant to their jobs.

- ***Training for data use***. The percentage of faculty who indicated that they had been involved in training or professional development on institutional research or data analysis in the past year ranged from 28 percent for the WA college faculty to 39 percent for the Round 1 college faculty. Over half of the faculty at the PA, WA, and Round 1 colleges said that they participated in training or professional development on program evaluation or assessment. While faculty who had recently participated in training or professional development in either of these topics were more likely to use data in their work, this finding does not necessarily mean that colleges could increase data use by increasing the amount of training provided, since it is possible that faculty and administrators who were heavier users of data were more likely to seek out training in data use.

Possible Effect of Achieving the Dream on Data Use

Not surprisingly, faculty and administrators who participated in Achieving the Dream activities were significantly more likely to use data on student outcomes than were those not involved in the initiative. Moreover, faculty at the Round 1 colleges were significantly more

likely than those in the PA and WA colleges to indicate that they use data on retention and graduation rates frequently. This is consistent with the hypothesis that colleges that have been involved in Achieving the Dream longer should be more advanced in their use of data for improving student success. However, neither finding can be seen as definitive evidence of a causal relationship between Achieving the Dream and more extensive use of data for improvement. CCRC and MDRC will have better evidence with which to examine the effect of Achieving the Dream on data use when we conduct a follow-up survey of faculty and administrators in the WA and PA colleges in two years, near the end of their participation in the initiative.

College Progress on Institutional Improvement in the Planning Year

During the planning year, Achieving the Dream colleges are expected to begin carrying out the first three steps of the initiative's five-step institutional improvement process, which are designed to engage college personnel in identifying areas where students are experiencing barriers to success and designing strategies to break down those barriers.

Commit to Improving Student Outcomes (Step 1)

This first step calls for the college's leadership to make a clear commitment to improve student outcomes, not just to increase enrollments.

- ***Senior leadership commitment***. Across all 13 PA and WA colleges, college leaders demonstrated a willingness to reallocate resources to improve student outcomes, including the hiring of additional institutional researchers. Eleven of the 13 college presidents were actively engaged in Achieving the Dream activities and were visible advocates for the initiative on their campuses, including regular participation in core team planning. (The core team was to include the college's president, vice presidents or deans for academic affairs and student services, a faculty representative, and a person responsible for institutional research or effectiveness.) Most presidents — a larger percentage than Round 1 college presidents — tapped members of their cabinets or executive teams to lead the implementation of the initiative, and they all kept their board of directors regularly updated on initiative activities throughout both the planning year and the first implementation year.

- ***Incentives for leadership commitment***. None of the colleges considered grant money as an incentive for participation in Achieving the Dream. Rather, they identified the following as incentives: (1) consistency with

previously-identified college goals; (2) involvement with a high-profile national student success initiative, which lent prestige to the college and allowed conversations with faculty and staff about student outcomes without creating the perception that the administration was blaming the faculty for poor student outcomes; (3) provision of a roadmap to achieve the goals of improving outcomes and closing the achievement gap; (4), synergy with accreditation standards, which would help their college prepare for compliance through the development of the culture-of-evidence approach to institutional improvement; and (5) alignment with state higher education goals and performance accountability requirements.

- ***Internal college communication about Achieving the Dream***. The PA and WA presidents and senior administrators used a variety of methods to inform the college community about the initiative, including college-wide forums such as fall convocations, faculty in-services and other professional development days, email alerts, data briefs, and featured presentations by Achieving the Dream coaches and data facilitators. In over half of the colleges in both PA and WA, faculty and staff interviewed by the research team suggested that a substantial number of their colleagues understood both the goals and the details of the initiative.

- ***Organization and management of the initiative***. All of the colleges began their Achieving the Dream work with a core team, which generally involved representatives of a broad cross-section of college personnel, including faculty leaders, mid-level administrators, and student services staff. All but two colleges also began the planning year with separate data teams, and, with one exception, they included non-IR personnel. One of them started its planning year with a combined core and data team and the other created not just one data team, but a team for each of the five main Achieving the Dream performance indicators. Other strategies used by the colleges to promote support for the initiative were the engagement of faculty and faculty union leaders in core team activities and the rotation of the core team membership to facilitate understanding of the initiative and participation among a broad segment of the college.

Use Data to Identify and Prioritize Problems (Step 2)

Step 2 of the Achieving the Dream process of building a culture of evidence calls for the colleges to use longitudinal student cohort data and other evidence to identify gaps in achievement among different student groups as well as "leakage points" where students struggle

or drop out. A key assumption of this approach is that once faculty and staff see that certain groups of students are not doing as well as others, they will be motivated to address barriers to student success.

- ***Process for identifying achievement gaps***. All 13 colleges relied on an analysis of their own college's data as the primary means of identifying gaps in student achievement, though the majority had not done so before joining the initiative. Twelve used longitudinal cohort analysis to identify problems, and all the colleges disaggregated their data analyses by student race and ethnicity to identify achievement gaps. The colleges collected qualitative data to identify problem areas through both student and faculty focus groups and student surveys. In contrast, only about half of the Round 1 colleges used longitudinal cohort tracking as part of their analysis of student performance.

- ***Institutional research capacity***. Just over half of the colleges hired new staff for their institutional research offices. Two of the three colleges that did not have an IR department prior to joining the initiative established institutional research (or institutional effectiveness) offices. IR personnel turnover delayed the data collection and work of the data teams to various extents across the colleges, and several colleges had difficulty hiring IR staff.

- ***Presentation of data analysis to faculty and staff***. All 13 colleges presented the results of their analysis of achievement gaps to faculty and staff across their institutions using a variety of communication methods. While evidence of poor student performance caused some faculty to deny it was their responsibility (though fewer PA and WA college faculty did so than Round 1 faculty), or to blame the students, in general such data was met with genuine interest and reflection by faculty and staff. Indeed, at every PA and WA college, faculty and staff indicated that the identified achievement gaps and problems areas in student outcomes provided motivation to improve and prioritize student success strategies. Round 1 college faculty were less motivated by such findings, and some were concerned that data on student performance would be used to penalize them.

Engage Stakeholders in Developing Strategies for Addressing Priority Problems (Step 3)

In Step 3 of building a culture of evidence, Achieving the Dream encourages the colleges to involve as many voices as possible in the process even though doing so could prove challenging for colleges already stretched thin serving disadvantaged students. The buy-in of

faculty and staff on the front lines of working with students is critical for effective and sustainable student success interventions.

- ***Receptiveness to the initiative***. Faculty at the PA, WA, and Round 1 colleges generally had a favorable view of the initiative, particularly when adherence to its goals and principles supported efforts they were already making. Colleges where there is healthy collaboration between administrators and faculty and student services staff were more receptive to the initiative.

- ***Concerns about Achieving the Dream***. At almost half of the colleges, some faculty members were concerned about the time requirements of the initiative, particularly if it would be short lived. At several colleges, some faculty expressed concern that improving student success would mean lowering standards.

- ***Process for designing strategies to address achievement gaps***. Colleges largely followed the Achieving the Dream planning process in the design of new strategies and most did not develop improvement strategies until after analyzing their data. Teams from all 13 colleges participated in the Achieving the Dream Strategy Institute, which was also well attended by teams from previous rounds. Several colleges took note of mistakes and successes of these earlier round colleges, and many of the strategies adopted in WA and PA were informed by presentations at the Strategy Institute. In addition, college personnel at several institutions reported using the Achieving the Dream website as an additional resource to support strategy development.

- ***Staff involvement in the planning process.*** Seven of the 13 colleges engaged faculty and staff on a fairly wide scale in the process of using data to develop student success strategies, a proportion comparable to that for the Round 1 colleges. Yet, at the other 6 colleges a relatively small number of faculty and staff were actively involved in analyzing the data on student success and identifying strategies for improvement. Only 2 colleges gave faculty release time from instruction to facilitate their participation in initiative planning. For adjunct faculty in particular, scheduling and college expectations regarding their participation on campus committees or at meetings were barriers to their involvement with the initiative.

- ***Board, student, and community engagement***. College presidents kept their boards of trustees regularly informed of initiative activities and a few colleges included board members on their core teams, but most board

members were not routinely engaged in the initiative. Similarly, while student focus groups contributed insights into problem areas at most colleges, no college chose to engage students directly in designing strategies. Community members or groups were rarely informed about the initiative or engaged in its activities.

First-Year Implementation of Strategies for Improving Success (Step 4)

In the fourth step toward building a culture of evidence, colleges begin implementing the strategies that they described in their implementation plans to evaluate the outcomes of their strategies and to use the results to make further improvements and scale up those that are successful.

Prevalent Strategies

The 13 PA and WA colleges, which had nearly completed their first year of a four-year institutional improvement process when the research team reviewed their progress, had developed strategies in seven broad categories that were similar to those developed by the Round 1 colleges: advising, developmental education, financial support, first year experience, high school and community outreach, professional development, and supplemental instruction/tutoring/study groups. The following four strategy types were most prevalent.

- ***Developmental education***. Twelve of the 13 colleges, like many of the Round 1 colleges, implemented at least one strategy that targeted students in developmental education courses. They involved the modification of academic policies, including the way that students were placed into developmental education; cohort-based learning and learning communities; curriculum restructuring; and course revision and expansion. Defining learning outcomes for developmental courses and putting in place mechanisms for assessing outcomes was a more common strategy among the PA and WA colleges than those in Round 1. Since student success in developmental math was a particular concern, 11 of the 13 colleges pursued strategies that targeted students who placed into developmental math.

- ***Supplemental instruction, tutoring, and study groups***. Eight of the 13 PA and WA colleges, like a majority of the Round 1 colleges, developed strategies for providing students — most often developmental education students or students in gatekeeper courses — with additional learning support resources. Four of them implemented supplemental instruction in which peer

leaders attended classes and held review sessions for students. One college was expanding its online tutoring capacity to reach students who lived considerable distances from the campus; another was experimenting with "embedded tutoring," in which a peer tutor shadowed struggling students in their courses each day then helped them during after-class hours.

- ***First-year experience***. One strategy designed to provide students with a positive initial college experience, which research shows is critical to persistence and success, is to develop student success courses. These courses, prevalent among the PA, WA, and Round 1 colleges, are designed to help first-year students build the knowledge and skills needed to succeed at college, such as study skills, and time and financial management, to develop plans for college and careers, and connect with support services.

- ***Advising strategies***. Eight of the PA and WA colleges implemented at least one new advising strategy. Several colleges were targeting underrepresented students for enhanced student advising, including first-time college students, Hispanic students, ESL students, academically underprepared students, and low-income students. Several colleges also began considering mandatory, though short-term, advisement for some students.

Colleges' Progress in Strategy Implementation

By the end of the first implementation year, all the PA and WA colleges had begun preliminary implementation of at least one strategy as part of Achieving the Dream, as the Round 1 colleges had at the same point in the process.

- ***Strategies under development***. Four of the 13 colleges were still in the early implementation phase; the colleges had staff working on the strategies and were in the process of making preliminary steps toward implementation, but the majority of their strategies were still under development. Colleges at this level often expressed a need for additional research and planning time. Other colleges were reviewing potential changes in institutional policies. Several college strategies required additional training for staff involved.

- ***Partial implementation***. At 9 of the 13 colleges the majority of initiative strategies were partially implemented: they were still piloting strategies or were in the process of revising or modifying them.

- ***Full implementation***. Three PA and two WA colleges had at least one strategy that was fully implemented in that it had reached the college's

proposed scale and target population. No college had a majority of its strategies fully implemented. Further, the few strategies that had been fully implemented were generally those with which the college had some experience in the past, those that represented a change in college policy or procedures, or were professional development activities for faculty and staff.

- ***Scope of target population for strategies***. Eight of the colleges had at least one or two strategies that were currently reaching large numbers of students: most concerned placement testing; alignment of developmental education, gatekeeper math, and English curricula; and ending late registration. Strategy implementation at the other colleges tended to still be in the early pilot stages, affecting a relatively small group of students thus far.

Factors Affecting Strategy Implementation

Several of the factors that influenced college progress in identifying student achievement gaps and developing strategies for addressing priority problems were also key to college progress in the implementation of initiative strategies.

- ***Faculty engagement***. Slightly more than half of the PA and WA colleges had successfully engaged faculty and staff in implementing initiative strategies, but most had difficulty initially in recruiting faculty, and, at one college, few faculty and staff were showing up for professional development activities, one of the college's strategies. Some college faculty were hesitant to commit time and energy to what might be a temporary undertaking.

- ***Student service staff engagement***. At 6 of the 13 colleges, Achieving the Dream substantially increased student services involvement in student success efforts and at another group of 6 colleges the initiative strengthened collaboration between faculty and student services. At a few colleges, inadequate collaboration between faculty and student services staff hampered implementation.

- ***Personnel turnover***. Considerable turnover in key personnel, a factor that delayed the collection and data analysis for some colleges, also delayed strategy implementation at three of them.

- ***Recruitment of students into strategies***. At least three colleges reported difficulty recruiting students for their strategies, and a PA college delayed implementation of three learning communities because of insufficient student enrollment.

Evaluation of Strategies

- ***Status of college evaluations***. Four of the colleges had formal plans for evaluating their strategies, but only two had developed what the research team considered to be sound evaluation designs. Because many of the colleges had faced delays in implementing strategies, they had few evaluation results by the time of the research team visits in spring 2008.

- ***Factors affecting the evaluation process***. Several colleges had little prior experience in evaluating program outcomes, and they lacked the institutional research capacity to conduct high-quality evaluations of the strategies. At just over half of the colleges, overburdened IR staff and turnover among IR personnel hindered evaluation. Weak collaboration between IR and faculty/staff was also an issue, with several colleges piloting interventions without much thought about proper research design.

Plans for Scaling Up Strategies

With a handful of exceptions, few of the PA and WA colleges, like their Round 1 counterparts at a similar stage in the initiative, had given much thought to bringing successful strategies to scale. Only two colleges appeared to have a plan for reaching more students. Most were still experimenting with small-scale strategies to see what worked.

- ***Impediments to scaling up***. Most colleges were not ready to scale up strategies because they did not yet know what worked. Several, which were under financial pressures or lacked discretionary funds, raised the question about the sustainability of their Achieving the Dream-supported strategies once the grant funding ran out.

Progress Toward Institutionalizing a Culture of Evidence (Step 5)

As of the time of our visits in spring 2008, the research team found that 4 of the 13 PA and WA colleges were beginning to institutionalize a culture of evidence on their campuses. Another 4 had made promising progress. The team found that 3 had made limited progress toward institutionalizing a culture of evidence, although major obstacles remained, and rated 2 as making little or no progress. In comparison, fewer than half of the Round 1 colleges were making progress toward institutionalizing a culture of evidence at a similar stage of the project. The research team identified several factors that distinguished the leaders from the laggards:

- ***Leadership commitment***. The president and other top administrators at leader colleges not only said that they were committed to student outcomes, they acted on their convictions, showing a willingness to make substantive changes in institutional policy and practice and to invest in resources necessary to support such changes.

- ***Faculty and staff engagement***. Leader colleges were more effective in involving faculty and student services staff in efforts to improve student success.

- ***Staff collaboration***. Collaboration between faculty and student services staff on student success efforts was stronger at leader colleges. Laggard colleges, conversely, often struggled to overcome the "silos" between academic and student affairs that often characterize community colleges generally.

- ***Cross-division communication***. Leader colleges were more likely to have in place committees for bringing together personnel from across the institution to work on student success.

- ***A strong institutional research department***. Leader colleges generally not only had the capacity to get the information they needed but IR staff was part of the management team. Some of the laggard colleges had strong IR departments, but they were not used strategically for improvement as they were in the leader colleges.

- ***Evidence-based program review and planning***. Leader colleges were more likely to have implemented evidence-based program review and strategic planning systems than were laggards, although having a strategic planning process was not sufficient to bring about changes in programs and services.

The Impact of Achieving the Dream

Some of the PA and WA colleges made more progress than others in moving toward a culture of evidence, and, indeed, the research team identified substantial progress at 8. Nevertheless, Achieving the Dream had positive effects on nearly all 13 of the PA and WA colleges involved. For some, Achieving the Dream provided a framework for analyzing data on student progression and outcomes that helped to focus college personnel on student achievement gaps and motivated them to find ways to address them. At several of the colleges, participating in Achieving the Dream helped to increase discussions about student success across the campus.

Effects at the Colleges

- ***Progress toward implementing a culture of evidence***. The initiative helped the two PA and two WA colleges that made the most progress toward implementing a culture of evidence speed the transformation that they had begun even before joining the initiative. The three PA colleges and one WA college that made promising progress expanded their IR capacity: Three had no IR staff when they joined the initiative, but two created IR offices and the third organized faculty and staff into teams to examine the effect of college policies on student success and to recommend changes; and the existing IR office at the fourth college assumed a much more prominent role in efforts to improve student success.

- ***Additional effects for all colleges***. Even the five colleges with limited progress realized benefits from the participation in Achieving the Dream. Among all 13 colleges: (a) most saw the initiative as an "umbrella" for other student success initiatives; (b) more than half either added IR staff, purchased data analysis software, or upgraded their information systems; (c) half changed their committee structure to allow for a greater focus on student success; (d) 10 reported that the initiative helped them prepare for or comply with accreditation requirements; and (e) 10 colleges reported that the initiative helped them meet statewide performance accountability requirements.

- ***Emphasis on equity***. About half the colleges in both states developed student success strategies designed expressly to address gaps in achievement by race/ethnicity or income, with most basing them on analyses of student outcomes data that indicated gaps in achievement among minority or low-income students. Most of the colleges, however, did not attempt to make inequities in achievement a college-wide focus and priority, and personnel at some colleges expressed concern that targeting particular groups of students for special support was unfair to other students.

The Value of the Achieving the Dream Supports

- ***Coaches and data facilitators***. These advisors were seen by most colleges as a particular strength of the Achieving the Dream initiative design. Many colleges saw their coach and data facilitator as a team and considered them to be mentors in the institutional change process.

- ***The Achieving the Dream database***. Less than half of the colleges relied on this database in the initial analyses they conducted as part of the planning phase, instead using their own data. A few colleges planned to use the national database to compare their performance to other colleges, but the one or two colleges that tried to use the database in this way had difficulty doing so.

- ***Strategy Institutes.*** In general, interview respondents who attended any of the annual Achieving the Dream Strategy Institutes found them useful. Several said that the opportunity to meet with colleagues from earlier-round colleges was particularly useful, and some indicated that they valued having time with colleagues from their own institutions.

Suggestions for Improvement

Increasing opportunities to learn what other colleges are doing was a common suggestion from the colleges, but interviewees also had other recommendations for the initiative:

- ***Increase opportunities to share information with other colleges***, so that they can learn about each other's strategies and progress.

- ***Increase the use of personnel from Achieving the Dream colleges as coaches for new colleges***, to ensure that they have relevant knowledge and to enable colleges to benefit from earlier participants in the initiative.

- ***Improve the availability of comparative performance data***, so that the colleges can know how they are faring in terms of student outcomes.

- ***Expand opportunities and support for faculty involvement***, since engaging faculty is a challenge for most colleges.

- ***Rethink Achieving the Dream plans for national expansion***, which include a fee-for-service model that might not attract participation from colleges that do not believe that they have an achievement gap.

Chapter 1

Introduction: Principles and Process for Improving Student Success and College Performance

This report presents the findings from baseline evaluation research conducted by the Community College Research Center (CCRC) and MDRC on the initial work of community colleges in Pennsylvania (PA) and Washington (WA) State that are seeking to transform policies and practices to improve student outcomes through participation in Achieving the Dream. The study examined the early efforts of the 13 PA and WA colleges to implement the Achieving the Dream institutional improvement process. Its findings are based on extensive on-site interviews with personnel at all 13 colleges, a survey of data use by faculty and administrators at these colleges, and an analysis of data on the performance of the colleges in the period before they joined the initiative. The findings from this study will be compared with follow-on research that CCRC and MDRC plan to conduct in two years to see what progress the colleges have made by the end of the five-year project period.

Overview of Achieving the Dream

Traditionally, community colleges have played a vital role in American society by expanding access to a college education for millions of Americans. In recent years, community college educators, under pressure from government agencies, accreditation agencies, and students themselves, have begun to pay more attention to what happens to students once they enter college and to take steps to increase the rates at which community college students earn college credentials and transfer to baccalaureate institutions.

One of the most important initiatives in this shift in community college attention from access to access *and* success is Achieving the Dream, a national initiative involving more than 80 colleges in 15 states. The initiative seeks to help more community college students succeed and is particularly concerned about students of color and low-income students, who traditionally have faced significant barriers to success.[1]

[1]For more information on Achieving the Dream, visit the initiative's website at: www.achievingthedream.org.

The Achieving the Dream Culture of Evidence Principles and Process[2]

Most efforts to improve community college student success involve specific programmatic interventions. Achieving the Dream is based on the premise that to improve outcomes for students on a substantial scale colleges need to change how they do business in fundamental ways. Specifically, colleges should create a "culture of inquiry and evidence" in which decisions about the design, delivery, and funding of programs and services are made based on evidence of what works to improve student outcomes. Colleges that operate in this way adhere to four principles:

- *Committed leadership.* The college's senior leaders actively support efforts to improve student success, not just enrollments, and are committed to achieving equity in student outcomes across racial, ethnic, and income groups. Senior administrators, board members, and faculty and staff leaders demonstrate a willingness to make changes in policy, procedures, and resource allocation to improve student success.

- *Use of evidence to improve programs and services.* The college has established processes for using data on student progression and outcomes to identify gaps in achievement, and to formulate strategies for addressing the gaps and evaluating the effectiveness of those strategies.

- *Broad engagement.* Faculty, staff, administrators, and students share responsibility for student success and work together to assess the effectiveness of programs and services and make improvements.

- *Systemic institutional improvement.* The college has an established planning process that relies on data to set goals for student success and measure goal attainment. Decisions about budget allocations are based on evidence of program effectiveness and are linked to plans to increase student success. The college offers faculty and staff professional development opportunities that reinforce efforts to improve student outcomes and close achievement gaps.

Achieving the Dream recommends that colleges transform themselves according to these principles and thereby build a culture of evidence through a five-step process:

[2]This section draws from the Achieving the Dream (2007) *Framework for Improving Student Outcomes and Institutional Performance*, which describes the initiative's model for institutional effectiveness. Figure 1.1, which illustrates the process, is taken from a recent report by Elizabeth Zachry (2008) of MDRC.

Step 1: Commit to improving student outcomes. The college's senior leadership, with support from the board of trustees and faculty leaders, commits to making the changes in policy and resource allocation necessary to improve student outcomes, communicates the vision widely within the college, and organizes teams to oversee the process.

Step 2: Use data to identify and prioritize problems. The college uses longitudinal student cohort data and other evidence to identify gaps in student achievement. A key premise of this approach is that once faculty and staff see that certain groups of students are not doing as well as others they will be motivated to address barriers to student success. To ensure that they focus their resources to greatest effect, colleges are encouraged to prioritize the student achievement problems that they plan to address.

Step 3: Engage stakeholders in developing strategies for addressing priority problems. The college engages faculty, staff, and other internal and external stakeholders in developing strategies for remedying priority problems with student achievement, based on a diagnosis of the causes and an evaluation of the effectiveness of previous attempts by the institution and others to address similar problems.

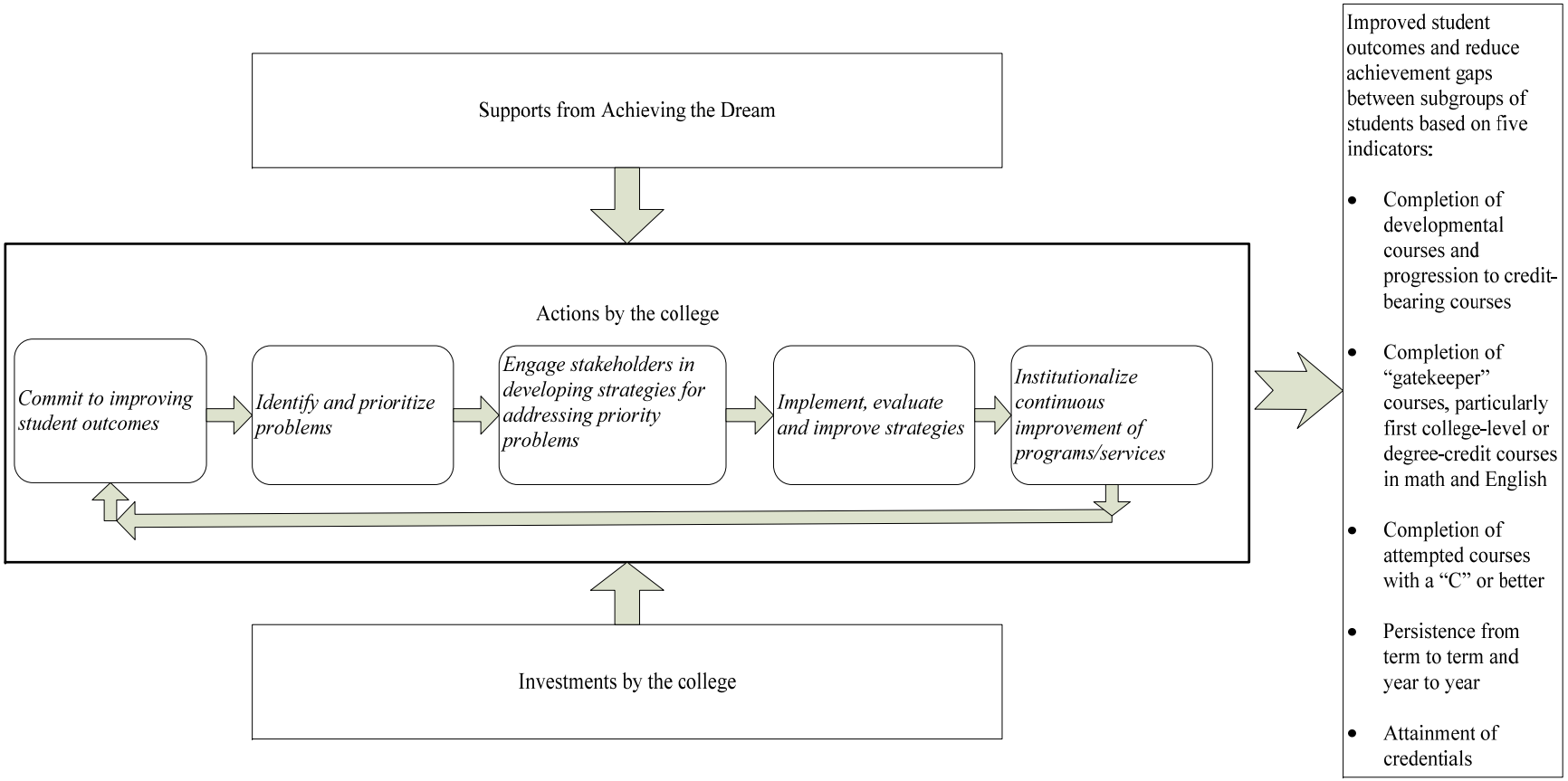
Step 4: Implement, evaluate, and improve strategies. The college then implements the strategies for addressing priority problems, being sure to evaluate the outcomes and using the results to make further improvements.

Step 5: Institutionalize continuous improvement of programs and services. The college takes steps to institutionalize processes for improving the impact of programs and services on student outcomes. Attention is given to how resources are allocated to bring new initiatives to scale and sustain proven strategies. Processes for program review, planning, and budgeting are driven by evidence of what works best for students.

Achieving the Dream expects that by following this institutional transformation process, colleges will be able continuously improve rates of student success, including increased persistence, course pass rates, and, ultimately, credential attainment. Figure 1.1 illustrates the initiative's theory of action.

Figure 1.1

Theory of Action for the Achieving the Dream Initiative



Achieving the Dream provides both financial and technical support to help colleges undertake this process. The financial support includes a one-year planning grant and implementation funding over four years that colleges can use to support data collection and analysis, engagement of faculty and staff, and implementation of improvement strategies. The technical support includes two outside consultants — a coach (usually a former community college president) and a data facilitator (usually a community college institutional researcher) — who advise the college on how to analyze its data on student success, interpret and communicate the findings to faculty and staff, and use the information to make improvements in college programs and services. The coach and data facilitator each spend 12 days working with the colleges during the planning phase and the first year of implementation, and then gradually reduce their time in subsequent years. In addition, teams from all of the colleges attend an annual institute designed to foster sharing of effective strategies.

Achieving the Dream Colleges in Pennsylvania and Washington

To date, more than 80 colleges in 15 states have joined Achieving the Dream and embarked on the institutional improvement process with financial support from Lumina Foundation for Education and other funders.

This report examines the planning and initial implementation work at 13 colleges, 7 in Pennsylvania and 6 in Washington State, that joined Achieving the Dream in 2006 in the third round of entering colleges. Table 1.1 identifies these colleges and presents some salient characteristics of the students they serve.

Table 1.1

Achieving the Dream Colleges in Pennsylvania and Washington State

Selected Characteristics, Academic Year 2005-06

College	Enrollment (FTE)	Minority Enrollment (%)	Pell Recipients (%)
Pennsylvania			
Allegheny County	12,443	28	34
Beaver County	1,886	20	37
Delaware County	3,664	29	21
Montgomery	5,684	31	18
Northampton	4,525	22	23
Philadelphia	13,542	68	54
Westmoreland	4,116	11	40
Washington State			
Big Bend	1,464	29	44
Highline	4,635	48	18
Renton Technical	2,782	51	27
Seattle Central	4,912	47	21
Tacoma	5,064	39	30
Yakima	3,592	38	40

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS).

The participating colleges in the two states were chosen through somewhat different processes. In Pennsylvania, a request for proposals was sent to 14 community colleges that serve high percentages of low-income students or students of color based on IPEDS data. The percentage of students who receive Pell grants was used as a proxy (admittedly imperfect) of the proportion of students who are low income. All 14 Pennsylvania community colleges submitted proposals. Of them, 6 were chosen to receive one-year planning grants of $50,000 by reviewers organized by the national initiative. One other institution, Community College of Allegheny County (CCAC), was allowed to participate with its own funding. In Washington State, the 6 colleges that enrolled the highest proportions of low-income and/or minority students among the 34 community and technical colleges in the state were asked by the State Board for Community and Technical College (SBCTC) to submit proposals. All 6 submitted proposals and, following a review to ensure that the proposed activities were sound, all were awarded planning grants.

The 13 participating PA and WA colleges were provided with travel funds for five "core team" members to participate in a Kickoff Institute in July 2006. The core team was to

include the college's president, vice presidents or deans for academic affairs and student services, a faculty representative, and a person responsible for institutional research (IR) or effectiveness (IE). At the Kickoff Institute, each college's core team met with its coach and data facilitator to scope out a plan for the planning year. Back on campus, the colleges were advised to organize a "data team" consisting of institutional researchers and others who would conduct the necessary data analyses to inform the core team as it examined data on student progression, designed strategies for increasing student success, and, by the end of the planning year, prepared a multi-year proposal for implementing the strategies. The coach and data facilitator visited their colleges and met with the core and data teams at each.

At the end of the planning year, all 13 PA and WA colleges submitted proposals to implement the strategies for improving student success that they developed through the planning process. Six of the PA colleges received four-year implementation grants of $200,000 ($50,000 per year) from the Heinz Endowments. CCAC decided to continue to participate in the initiative using its own funds. All six Washington colleges received four-year implementation grants of $400,000 ($100,000 per year) from the Education Assistance Foundation (now called College Spark Washington). Throughout the four-year implementation period, all participating colleges will continue to receive technical assistance from their coach and data facilitator as well as support to attend annual Strategy Institutes, where teams from all Achieving the Dream colleges meet to share promising practices.

In effect, the goal of the planning year was to get the colleges started on the institutional transformation process by focusing on the first three steps: (1) commit to improving student outcomes; (2) use data to identify and prioritize problems, and (3) engage stakeholders in developing strategies for addressing priority problems. The four-year implementation plan developed during the planning year was designed to guide the colleges as they carried out the fourth step of the process: implement, evaluate, and improve strategies for improving student success. During the implementation period, colleges are expected to continue the first three steps of the process focused on further identifying gaps in student achievement and developing new strategies, and to begin the fifth step aimed at institutionalizing a culture of evidence on their campuses.

Research Questions

This report examines the efforts by the 13 Achieving the Dream colleges in Pennsylvania and Washington to begin implementing the initiative's institutional improvement process during planning and first implementation year.[3]

[3] For the sake of brevity, we will refer to the Pennsylvania colleges as the "PA colleges" and the Washington State colleges as the "WA colleges."

Specifically, the report addresses the following research questions:

- How closely did the PA and WA colleges follow the planning process recommended by Achieving the Dream? What obstacles did they encounter?
- Are any of the colleges using particularly innovative or effective methods for communicating the Achieving the Dream vision to stakeholders within and outside of the college and engaging faculty and student services staff on a wide-scale in the improvement process?
- What student success strategies are the colleges implementing, how much progress have they made on implementation, and what have been the preliminary results?
- To what extent is the Achieving the Dream work at these colleges focused on addressing achievement gaps and increasing equity in student outcomes across racial or ethnic and income groups?
- In what ways are faculty and administrators at the PA and WA Achieving the Dream colleges using data on student outcomes?
- How far along are these colleges in implementing the Achieving the Dream principles of institutional improvement and thereby building a culture of evidence? To what extent have colleges linked their work on Achieving the Dream with other efforts to bring about systemic improvements in institutional performance?
- Has Achieving the Dream contributed to the colleges' progress to date in building a culture of evidence for student success? What more can the initiative do? What more do the colleges themselves need to do?

In addition, this study parallels baseline evaluation research that CCRC and MDRC conducted with the 27 colleges that comprised the Achieving the Dream cohort in the first round at a similar stage of their work (spring of the first implementation year).[4] Since the initiative has learned from the experience documented in that earlier report, this study sought to see if there is evidence that the third-round colleges in PA and WA have been able to make faster progress than the first-round colleges in building a culture of evidence at a similar stage in their participation in the initiative.

This report presents a baseline analysis of the early efforts of the PA and WA colleges in implementing the Achieving the Dream improvement process. CCRC and MDRC plan to

[4]Brock et al. (2007).

conduct a second round of visits and data analysis in two years. We will use this baseline assessment to gauge the progress colleges have made by the end of the five-year project period.

Methodology

To address the questions presented above, CCRC and MDRC took a multi-pronged approach to the research.

Field Research

The research team visited all 13 colleges in spring 2008. At each institution, evaluators interviewed key personnel involved with the initiative, including college presidents, vice presidents, deans, institutional researchers, and faculty members. The interview protocol was based on the Achieving the Dream *Framework for Improving Student Outcomes and Institutional Performance*, which describes the initiative's model for institutional effectiveness. Appendix A presents a tool that the research team used to gauge the extent to which colleges have implemented practices that reflect the various principles of this model.

The interviews covered a range of topics, including how colleges organized and carried out the planning process; what strategies were identified; how broad the involvement of faculty, staff, and others was in the effort; and what impact, if any, the Achieving the Dream work by college personnel and outside support from the initiative had on colleges' efforts to improve student outcomes. The evaluators also interviewed a few faculty members on each campus who were *not* directly involved in the initiative to gauge their awareness of Achieving the Dream and to ask for their perceptions about efforts to improve student outcomes at the college. Most interviews were conducted individually or in small groups and lasted about an hour. The interviews followed a protocol to ensure that similar questions were asked of comparable people at all of the colleges. The notes generated from these interviews were analyzed using the tool in Appendix A. To protect confidentiality, names of individual respondents or colleges are not identified in this report.

Survey of Data Use by Faculty and Administrators

CCRC and MDRC also conducted a survey of the use of student data by faculty and administrators at the PA and WA colleges as well as at the 27 first-round Achieving the Dream colleges. The survey asked full-time faculty and administrators about what student data they use, how accessible data on students are at their college, how they use data in their jobs, and what types of data they find most useful. It also asked respondents about their familiarity and involvement with Achieving the Dream. The survey, conducted over five months beginning in September 2007, received a very favorable response rate: 60 percent of faculty and 73 percent

of administrators surveyed responded. In this report, we compared the average responses to examine the patterns of data use in the PA and WA Achieving the Dream colleges to ascertain if there were notable differences between the PA and WA colleges, and between these third-round colleges and those that entered in the first round.

Analysis of Baseline Data

CCRC and MDRC also analyzed data on student progression and outcomes that the Achieving the Dream colleges were required to submit to a centralized database managed by the initiative. Specifically, we examined the performance of the PA and WA colleges on the five indicators established by the initiative for participating colleges. They include completion of developmental courses in math, English, and reading; completion of "gatekeeper" courses (that is, the first college-level courses) in English and math; the ratio of completed credits to attempted credits; persistence from semester to semester and year to year; and completion of certificates, diplomas, or associate degrees. We calculated average institutional rates on each indicator for all students and sub-groups defined by race/ethnicity, gender, Pell grant receipt (as a proxy for low-income status), and referral to developmental courses. We compared the performance on these measures of the PA and WA colleges for the three-year period *before* they joined the initiative as a baseline for examining their performance after they joined. We also compared the baseline performance of the 13 third-round colleges with that of the first-round colleges during a similar three-year period prior to joining Achieving the Dream.

Comparison with Baseline Findings of First-Round Colleges

The findings from this study of the PA and WA Achieving the Dream colleges were compared with those of the baseline evaluation of the colleges that joined the initiative in the first round. That evaluation was also conducted by CCRC and MDRC.

Organization of the Report

This report is organized as follows: Chapter 2 presents statistics on the baseline performance of the PA and WA colleges prior to joining the initiative using the data submitted by the colleges to the initiative's national database. Chapter 3 presents results from the survey of patterns of data use by faculty and administrators at the PA and WA colleges compared with those in the first-round colleges. Chapter 4 examines the initial efforts by colleges on the first three steps of the Achieving the Dream institutional improvement process during the planning year. Chapter 5 describes the programmatic strategies for improving student success that the colleges identified during the planning year and are now implementing (as part of the fourth step of the improvement process) during the four-year implementation period that began in fall 2007 before our spring 2008 visits. Chapter 6 assesses the initial progress of the colleges in

institutionalizing and sustaining the institutional improvement model (step 5 of the process) reflected in the four Achieving the Dream principles. Chapters 1 through 6 each includes a comparison with the first-round Achieving the Dream colleges. Chapter 7 concludes with an assessment of the extent to which Achieving the Dream has benefited the PA and WA colleges to date and makes recommendations for ways the colleges and the initiative might improve the impact of their work.

Chapter 2

Baseline Performance of the Pennsylvania and Washington Colleges

Introduction

At the beginning of the initiative, the Achieving the Dream partners established five main performance indicators for participating colleges. The indicators are the rates at which a college's students:

(1) Successfully complete remedial or "developmental" courses and progress to credit-bearing courses.

(2) Enroll in and successfully complete college-level "gatekeeper" courses.

(3) Complete the courses they take, with a grade of C or higher.

(4) Reenroll from one semester to the next.

(5) Earn certificates and/or degrees.

These indicators were chosen because most community colleges can readily measure them. Also, they reflect the importance of tracking community college students' progress over time across intermediate milestones since community college students often take a long time to earn credentials. Moreover, a substantial number of degree-seeking community college students have to take developmental courses. Many of them do not progress to college-level coursework, and, of those who do, too many do not pass their first college-level courses. Specific measures were developed for the five performance indicators. They are identified in the tables in Appendix B.

Colleges participating in Achieving the Dream are required to report unit record data on cohorts of first-time, degree-seeking students to a database maintained by the initiative. They submit data for new fall cohorts and regular updates on the progress of earlier cohorts. By the end of the four-year Achieving the Dream implementation phase, each PA and WA college will have submitted at least two years of data on six cohorts of students — three cohorts prior to implementation and three after. This will make it possible to compare rates and identify trends for students who enrolled before the start of the implementation phase and those who enrolled after.

Achieving the Dream expects each college both to improve overall student outcomes on the indicators and to narrow the gaps in attainment among students groups.

This chapter presents statistics on the baseline performance of the PA and WA colleges on the Achieving the Dream student achievement measures for the three-year period before each college joined Achieving the Dream. It examines differences between the baseline performance of the PA colleges and the WA colleges and compares the performance of these third-round colleges with that of the first-round colleges. These baseline data will be used to identify trends among participating colleges by comparing the baseline rates with the rates of cohorts of students who enroll after the Achieving the Dream implementation phase.

The statistics presented here are based on institutional means, not averages for the pooled sample of all students. Thus, each college is weighted equally, regardless of the size of its enrollment.

Baseline Performance

The average institutional rates for PA and WA colleges on most of the baseline performance measures were low. This finding was not unexpected given that Round 1 colleges also had low rates for their baseline measures.

While there was variation in the average performance rates for WA, PA, and Round 1 colleges on all of the Achieving the Dream measures, there was often more substantial variation within these three groups than among them. For example, average rates for successful completion of highest-level developmental math were 37 percent (PA), 27 percent (WA), and 29 percent (Rd 1), while the range for PA colleges was much larger (51 percent to 7 percent) than the range for WA colleges (31 percent to 22 percent).

PA had a higher average rate than WA on 10 measures of the indicators and WA had a higher average rate on the other 7. The difference between PA and WA was less than 1 percentage point on 2 of the 17 measures, and the difference was greater than 10 percentage points on only 3 measures, indicating that overall the spread in average rates between the two states was not great on most measures.

The following sections of this chapter present the statistics for average institutional rates on each of the 17 specific measures of the five Achieving the Dream performance indicators. The statistics are based on the progression and outcomes of cohorts of first-time community college students in fall 2004 who were tracked over three years. In addition to the information on the figures in each section, the tables in Appendix B provide more detailed statistics on each measure.

Developmental Courses

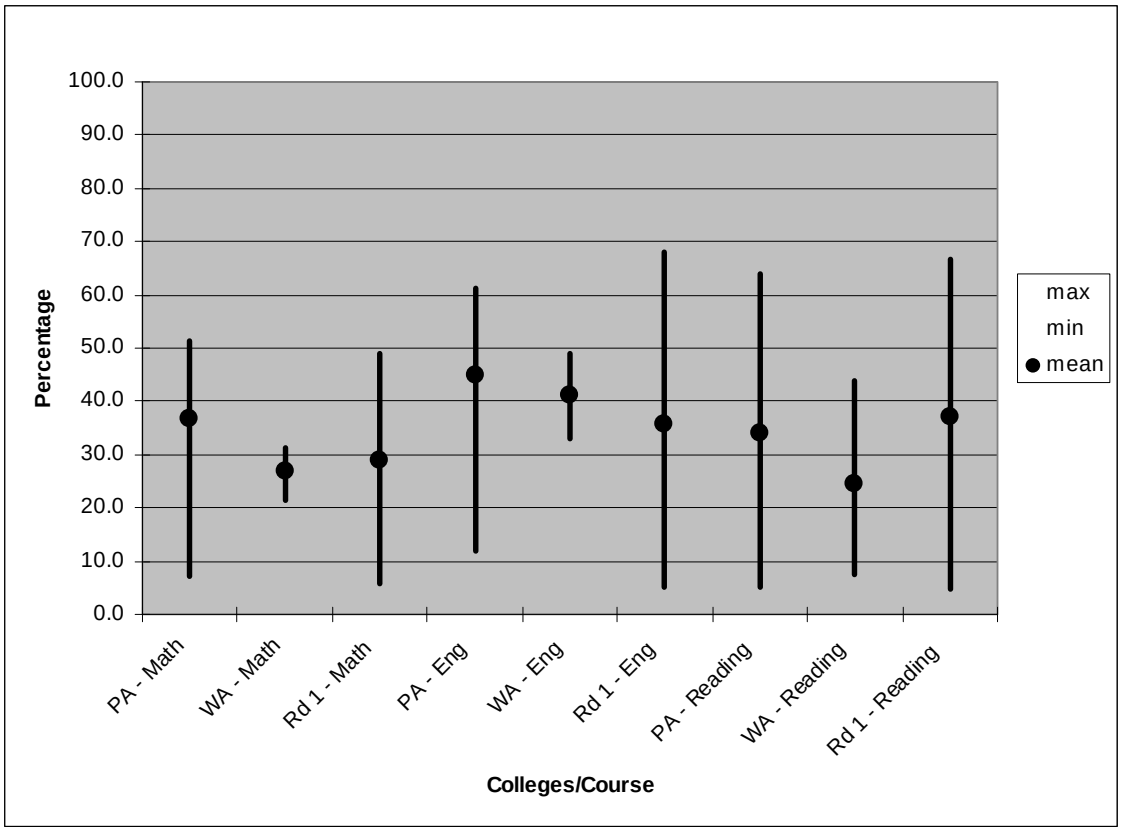
The first set of measures shows the average rates at which students completed the highest-level developmental education courses at PA, WA, and Round 1 colleges (Figure 2.1). A significant percentage of degree-seeking community college students takes developmental courses and many do not progress to college-level coursework. Therefore, completion of the highest-level developmental courses is an important intermediate milestone and a key area for colleges' improvement process.

PA colleges had a higher average rate of successful completion for developmental instruction in all three subjects (math, English, and reading) than WA colleges had. WA rates were slightly lower than those in PA, although rates in WA did not vary as widely as in PA. In developmental math, for example, PA rates ranged from 7 percent to over 50 percent, whereas WA rates only ranged from 22 percent to 31 percent.

Turning to a comparison with Round 1 colleges, both PA and WA colleges had higher average rates of completion for developmental English than Round 1 colleges, but Round 1 colleges had a higher completion rate than both PA and WA in developmental reading. Interestingly, the lowest rate for Round 1 colleges among the three developmental subjects was in math, but for both PA and WA, the lowest rate among the three subjects was in reading. Taking into account all of the average rates for all three sets of data, the highest average completion percentage was PA students in developmental English (about 45 percent) and the lowest completion percentage was WA students in developmental reading (about 20 percent).

Figure 2.1

Successful Completion of the Highest Level Developmental Courses



Gatekeeper Courses

Rates of completion of the first-level "gatekeeper" courses in math and English are important measures for Achieving the Dream because studies have shown that passing these courses is associated with a higher likelihood of graduating.[5] Therefore, student success in gatekeeper courses is one of the important areas of improvement for Achieving the Dream colleges.

PA and WA colleges had higher average rates of completion in gatekeeper English courses (46 percent and 42 percent, respectively) than they did in gatekeeper math courses (28

[5]Calcagno, Crosta, Bailey, and Jenkins (2007).

percent and 27 percent). Interestingly, in both PA and WA, the average rates at which students completed gatekeeper English courses were higher for students who were referred to developmental instruction than for students who were not referred to remediation (Figures 2.2 to 2.5, Table B.8). In PA, students referred to developmental instruction completed at about 49 percent while those not referred completed at about 45 percent. The difference was more pronounced among WA colleges, where students referred to remediation completed gatekeeper English at 53 percent while those not referred to remediation completed at 46 percent. It may be that students who were referred to and successfully completed developmental English were better prepared for college-level English courses. It is not clear why this difference only occurred for gatekeeper English and not gatekeeper math.

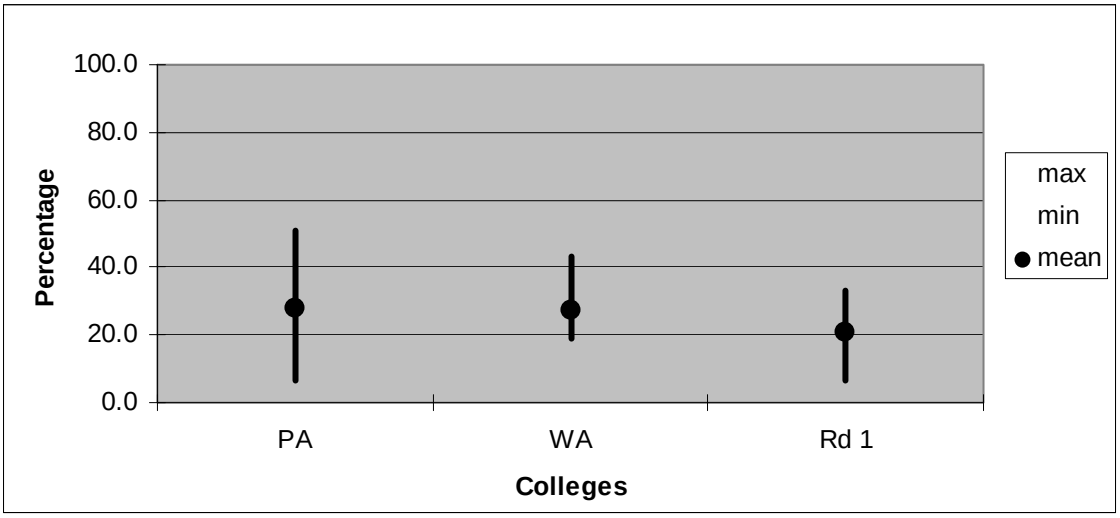
Both PA and WA colleges had higher average rates of completion in both math and English gatekeeper courses than did Round 1 colleges.

Because of the correlation between success in gatekeeper courses and an increased likelihood of graduating, and the relatively low rates of successful completion of English and math gatekeeper courses among colleges in PA and WA, these colleges are advised to find ways to improve their performance on this critical benchmark. Additional analyses of the baseline data (and data for subsequent cohorts) may provide better insight into what is preventing successful completion of these courses and lead to the development of targeted strategies that address this challenge. Institutional improvements in this area may help to increase rates of certificate or degree completion.

Achieving the Dream: Community Colleges Count

Figure 2.2

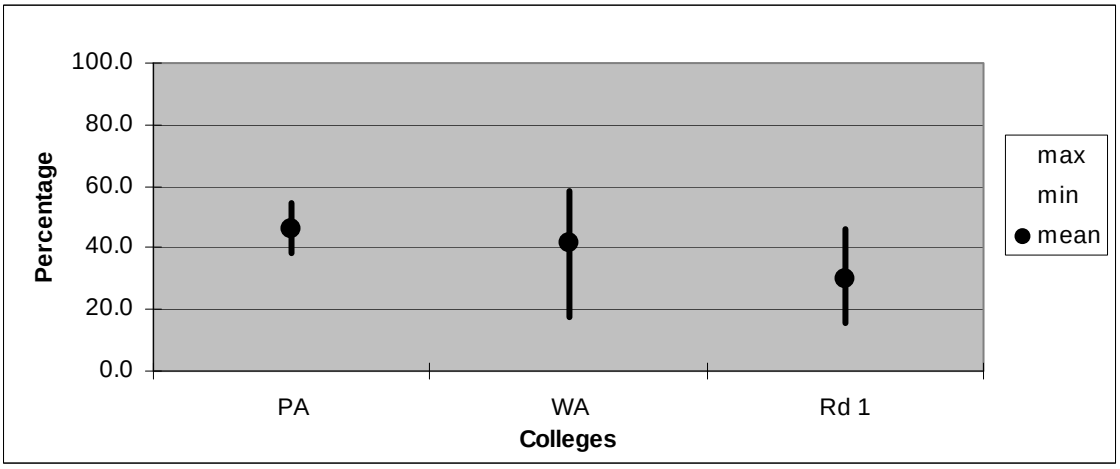
Successful Completion of Gatekeeper Math Course



Achieving the Dream: Community Colleges Count

Figure 2.3

Successful Completion of Gatekeeper English Course



Achieving the Dream: Community Colleges Count

Figure 2.4

Successful Completion of Gatekeeper Math Course by Referral Status

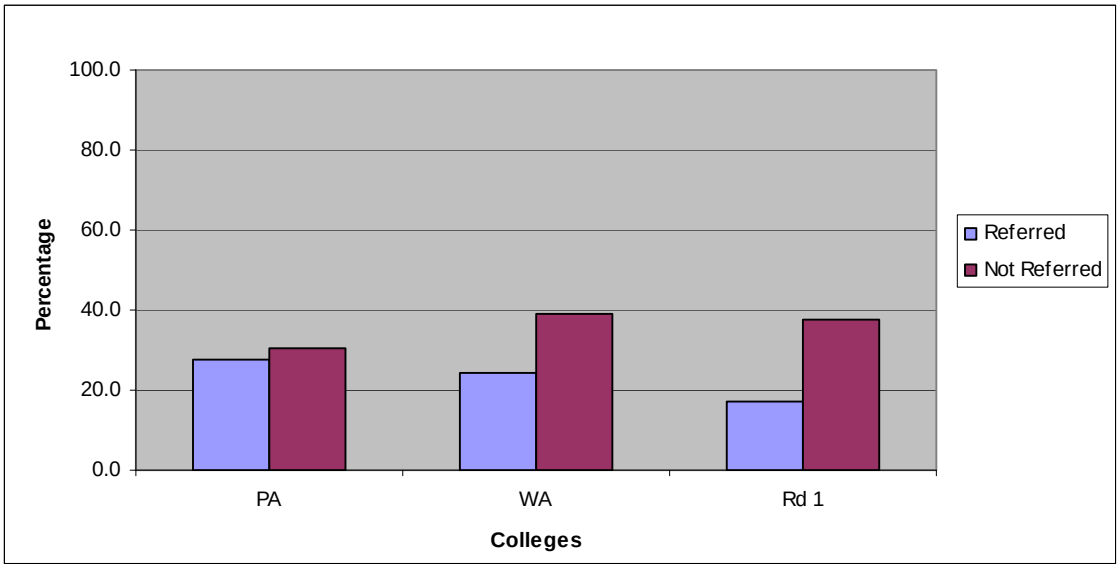
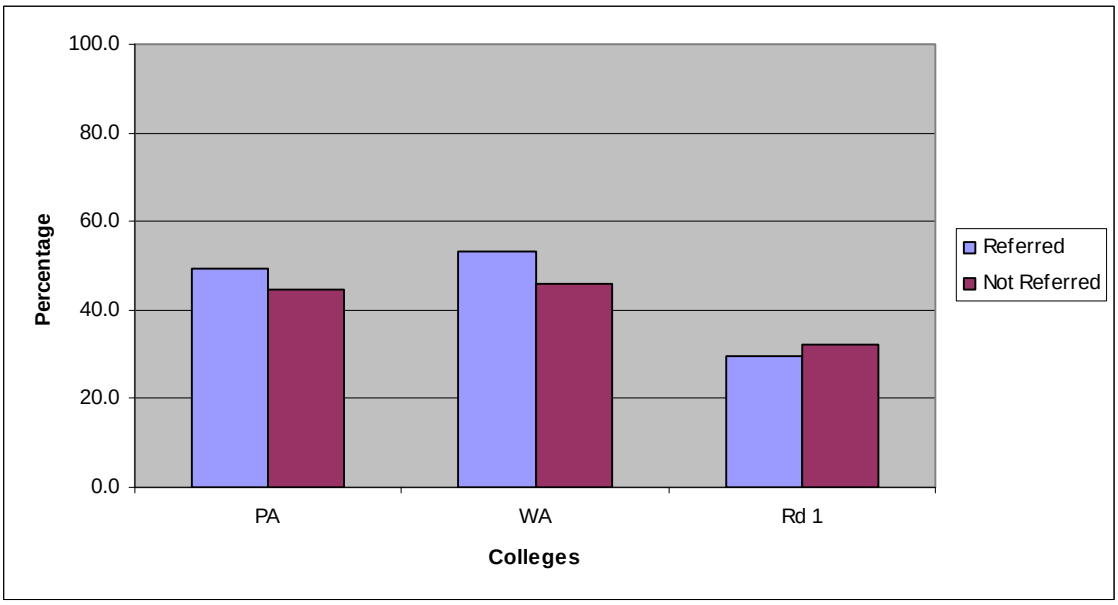


Figure 2.5

Successful Completion of Gatekeeper English Course by Referral Status

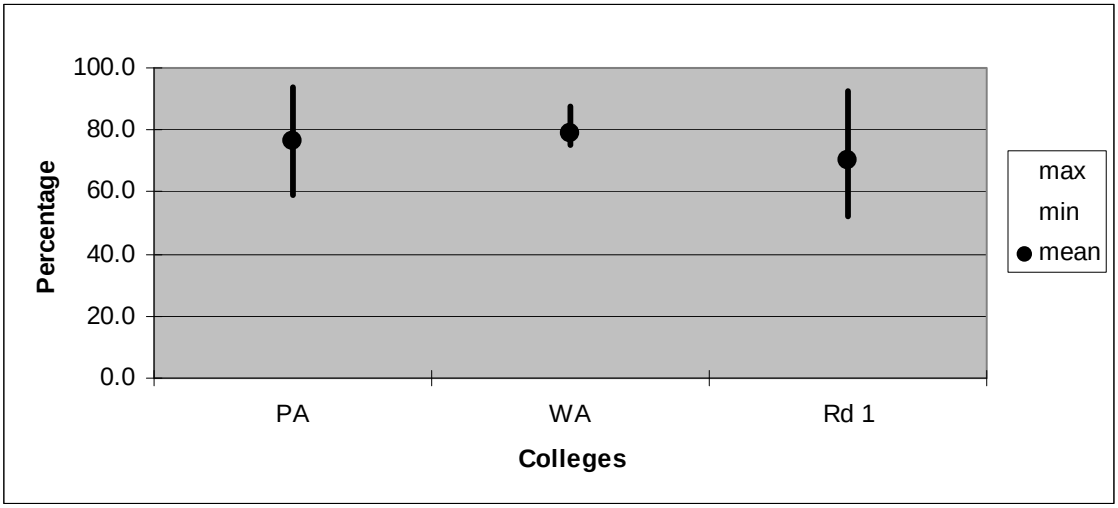


Course Completion

The average course completion rates for PA and WA colleges were very similar (76 percent and 79 percent, respectively). However, PA colleges ranged from 59 percent to almost 94 percent, a much larger variation than WA colleges, which ranged from 75 percent to 88 percent (Figure 2.6). The difference in range suggests that students across the WA colleges were more consistently completing courses. The course completion rate at Round 1 colleges did not differ dramatically from PA and WA, although it was slightly lower at 70 percent. Round 1 colleges exhibited a range similar to PA (52 percent to 92 percent).

Figure 2.6

Ratio of Completed Credits to Attempted Credits



Persistence

As would be expected, the average rates of enrollment decreased as the period of time from initial enrollment increased (Figures 2.7 to 2.9). WA colleges had the highest percentage of students persisting across the three measured periods of time.[6] Interestingly, as time passed, the gap between WA colleges' rates of persistence and both PA and Round 1 colleges' rates of persistence increased. All three sets of colleges showed persistence rates between 70 and 74 percent in the first semester after the initial term of enrollment. By the third year persistence measure, however, the gap between WA colleges (40 percent) and PA (30 percent) and Round 1 colleges (33 percent) had widened. This increased gap may help to explain why WA colleges had a higher average rate of completion within three years (27 percent) than both PA and Round 1 colleges (both about 10 percent). Across the three-year period measured, PA and Round 1 colleges exhibited very similar average rates of persistence (Figure 2.10).

The decrease in student persistence over time is not surprising given the low rate at which students earned a certificate or degree within three years at the colleges. With an average

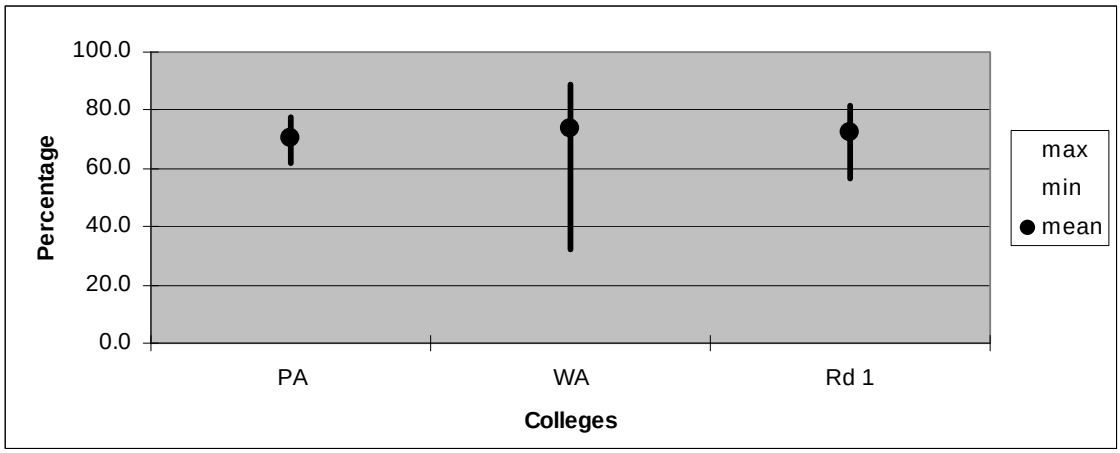
[6]For the three measures of persistence included in the baseline performance of PA and WA colleges, the average rates of persistence took into account any students who completed within the years of the measures. This approach was taken to ensure that the colleges' rates of persistence would not be negatively affected by including in the number of students not persisting in subsequent semesters those students who did complete.

completion rate of just over 10 percent, PA colleges in particular need to focus on the decline in enrollment in semesters after students initially enroll. Further analyses of student data to inform the development of strategies focusing on increasing student persistence, and specifically emphasizing continuous enrollment from one semester to the next, will likely help to increase the rate at which students earn college credentials.

Achieving the Dream: Community Colleges Count

Figure 2.7

Enrolled in the First Semester after the Initial Term or Completed Within One Year

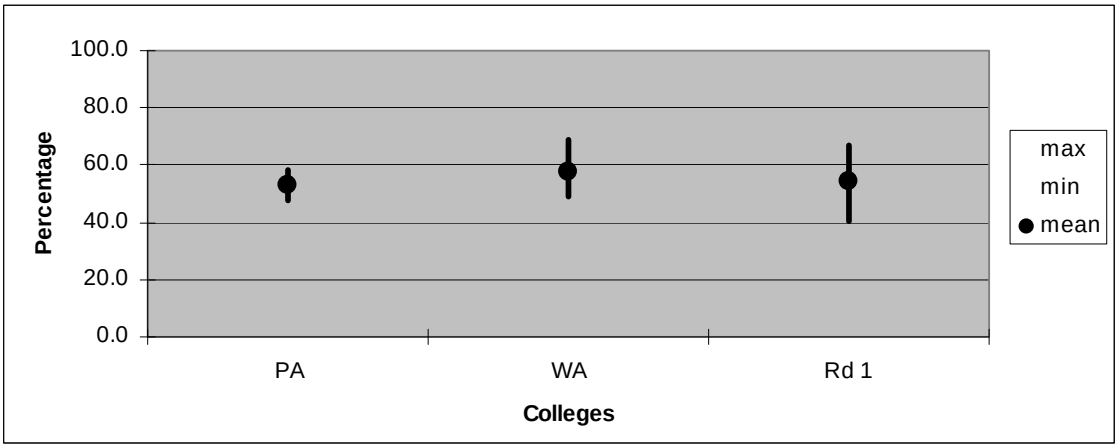


Achieving the Dream: Community Colleges Count

Figure 2.8

Enrolled in at Least One Semester in the Second Year

or Completed Within Two Years



Achieving the Dream: Community Colleges Count

Figure 2.9

Enrolled in at Least One Semester in Each of the First Three Years

or Completed Within Three Years

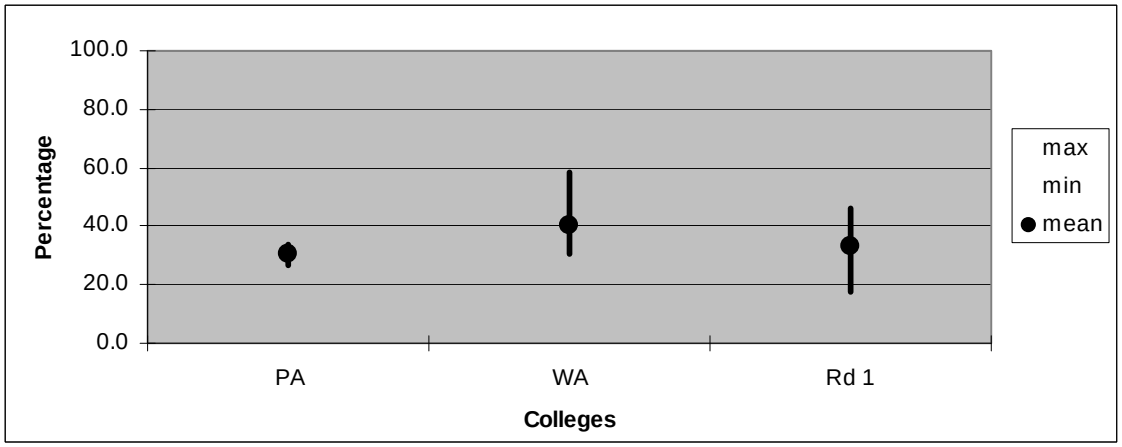
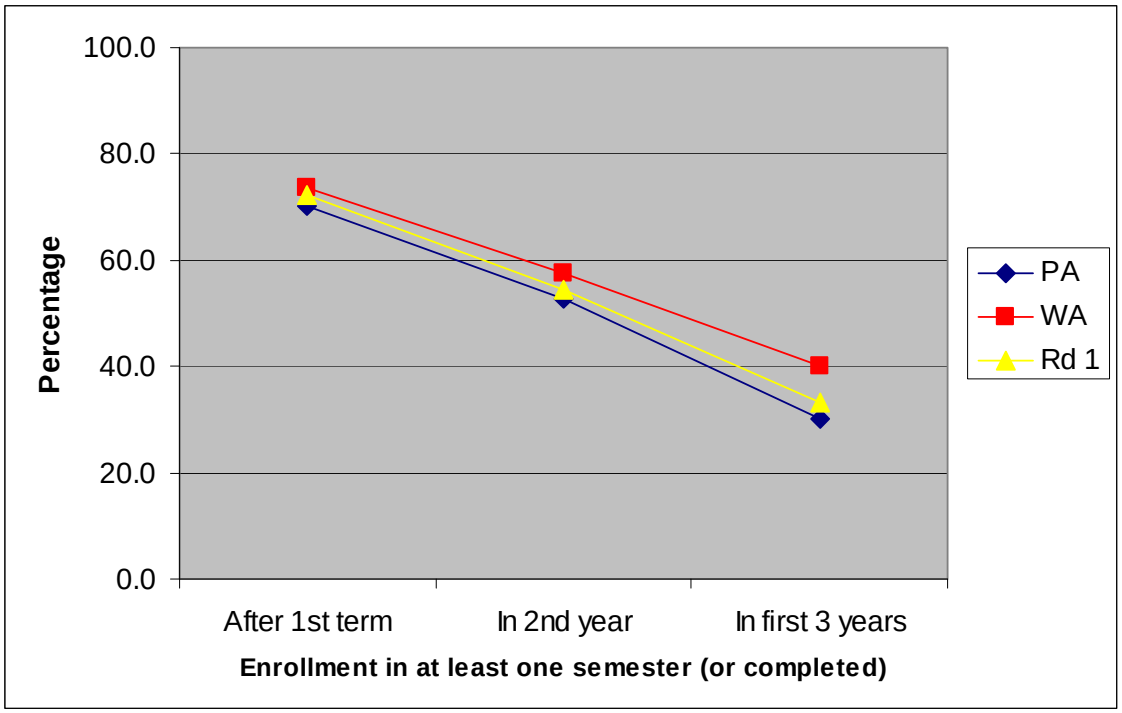


Figure 2.10

Persistence



Credential Completion

PA colleges' average rate of credential completion closely matched the Round 1 colleges at about 10 percent, while WA's average rate was higher, with a credential completion rate of just over 27 percent. However, when measuring the rates of students enrolled in at least one semester in the third year, WA colleges had a lower rate (21 percent) than both PA colleges (31 percent) and Round 1 colleges (29 percent). This difference suggests that students in WA colleges were more successful at completing credentials programs in three years, while PA and Round 1 colleges had higher percentages of students still enrolled during the third year (Figures 2.11 to 2.15).

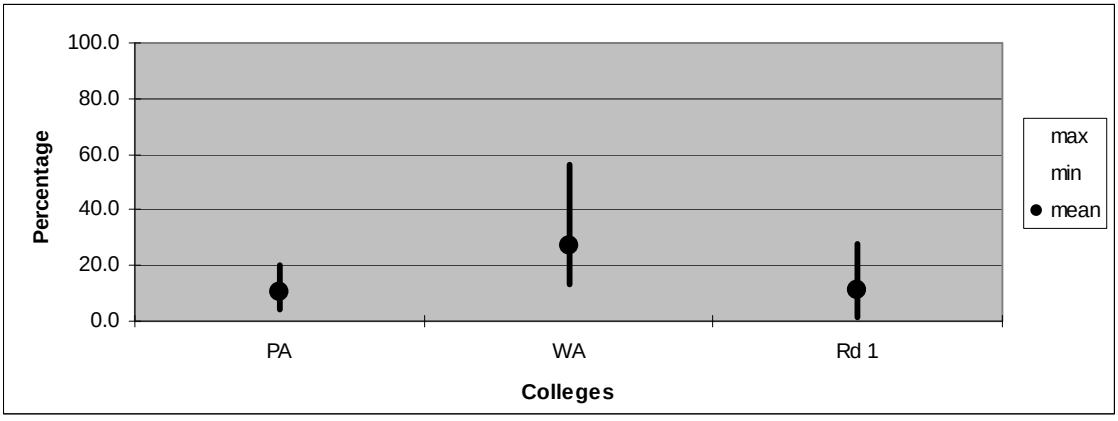
WA also had higher rates of obtaining an associate degree within three years (16 percent to 9 percent for PA and 7 percent for Round 1) and of obtaining a certificate or diploma within three years (11 percent to 1.5 percent for PA and 3.5 percent for Round 1 colleges). In addition to a rate of 11 percent in WA, there was also a significantly greater range of rates in

WA for obtaining a certificate or diploma within three years, from under 2 percent to 51 percent. WA's rates may have been higher because of a greater emphasis on career technical programs, which include occupational certificates, in the state. Similarly, the considerable range in the rates at which students in WA obtained a certificate or diploma may be the result of certain colleges in the state emphasizing certificate attainment in career and technical programs while others emphasize academic degrees and transfer. It could also mean that the colleges with higher rates on these measures are serving their students more effectively.

Achieving the Dream: Community Colleges Count

Figure 2.11

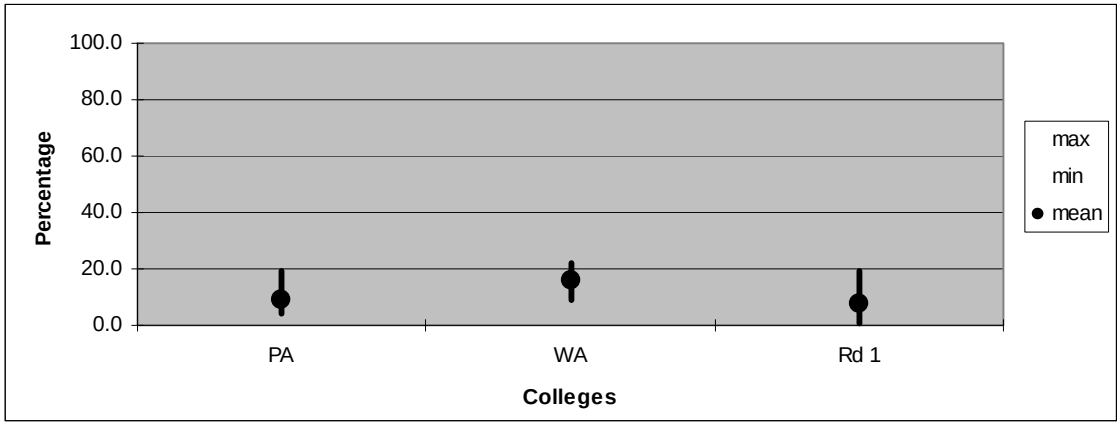
Completed Within Three Years



Achieving the Dream: Community Colleges Count

Figure 2.12

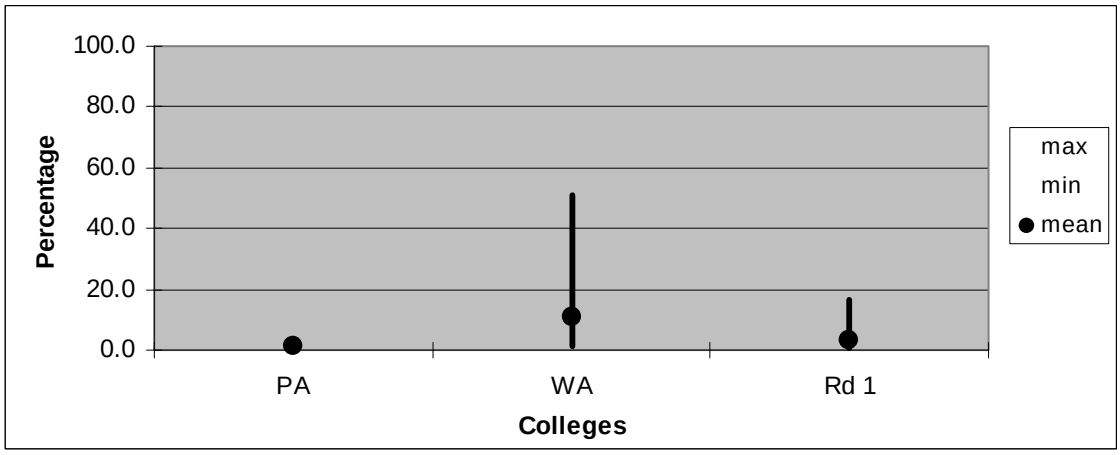
Obtained an Associate Degree Within Three Years



Achieving the Dream: Community Colleges Count

Figure 2.13

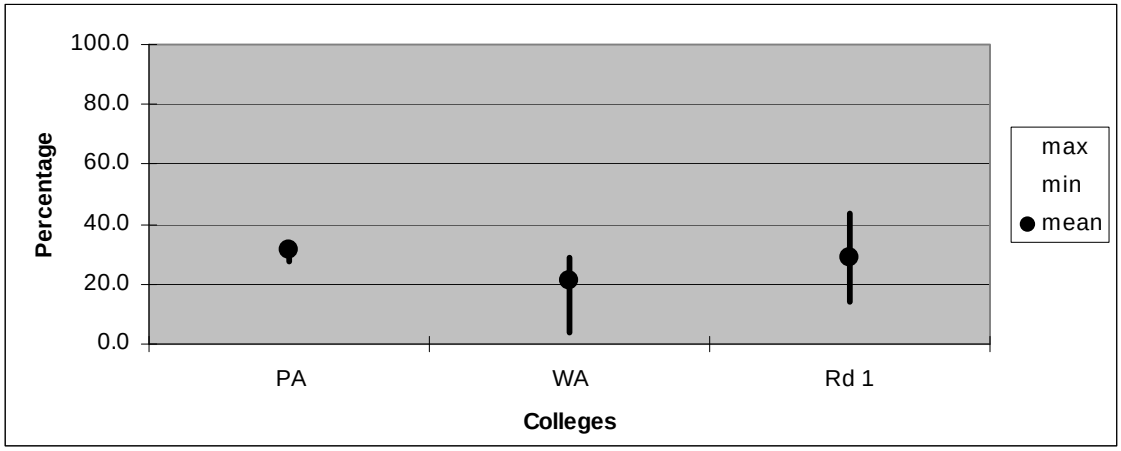
Obtained a Certificate or Diploma Within Three Years



Achieving the Dream: Community Colleges Count

Figure 2.14

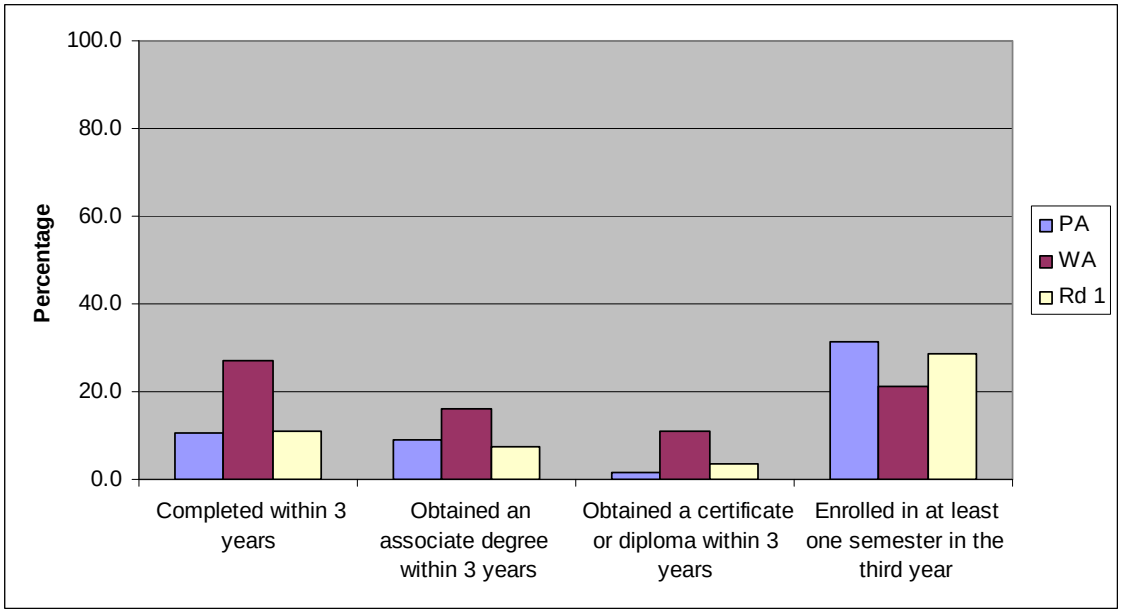
Enrolled in at Least One Semester in the Third Year



Achieving the Dream: Community Colleges Count

Figure 2.15

Completion Rates for PA, WA, and Round 1 Colleges



Pell Recipient Status

The federal Pell Grant program provides need-based grants to low-income students to promote access to postsecondary education. As such, Achieving the Dream is using the percentage of students who receive Pell Grants as a proxy measure for the proportion of students who are low income.

WA exhibited higher average rates of completion within three years for both Pell recipients and nonrecipients than did PA and Round 1 colleges. There was much less variation among PA colleges than WA colleges. Round 1 and PA colleges exhibited comparable average rates for both recipients and nonrecipients (Figures 2.16 and 2.17).

Consistent with Round 1 colleges, rates of persistence for WA and PA colleges were higher for Pell recipients than nonrecipients. However, for all three sets of data there was no significant difference in completion rates between Pell recipients and nonrecipients. In PA, for example, 66 percent of Pell recipients persisted into the second year but only 12 percent completed within three years. Similarly, 46 percent of nonrecipients persisted but only 10 percent completed within three years. These findings suggest that while Pell recipients may have an advantage over nonrecipients on intermediate measures of progress, such as persistence, this advantage does not appear to carry over to success in completing credentials.

Figure 2.16

Completion Within Three Years of Pell Recipients and Nonrecipients

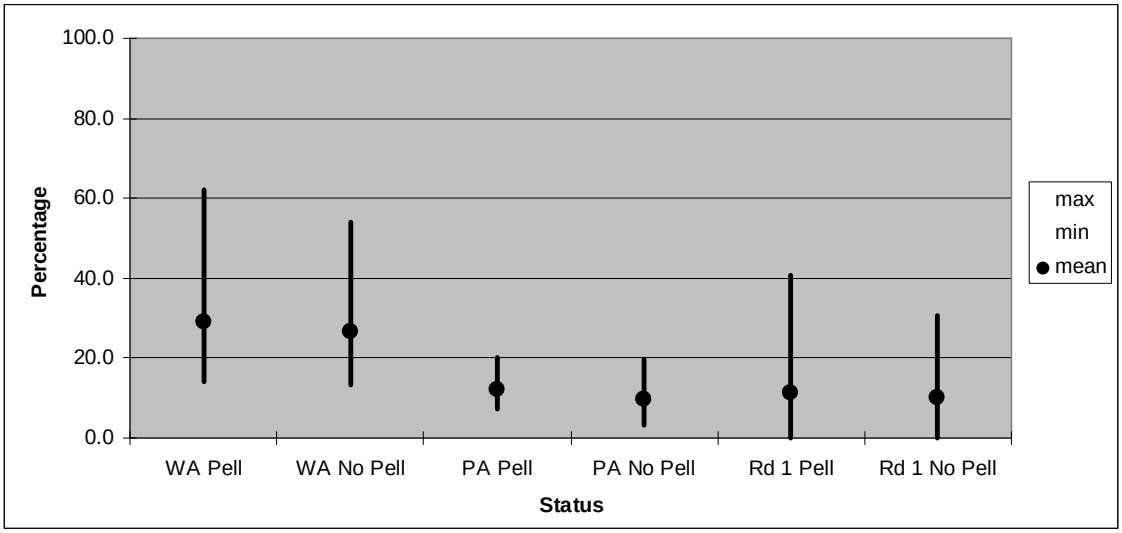
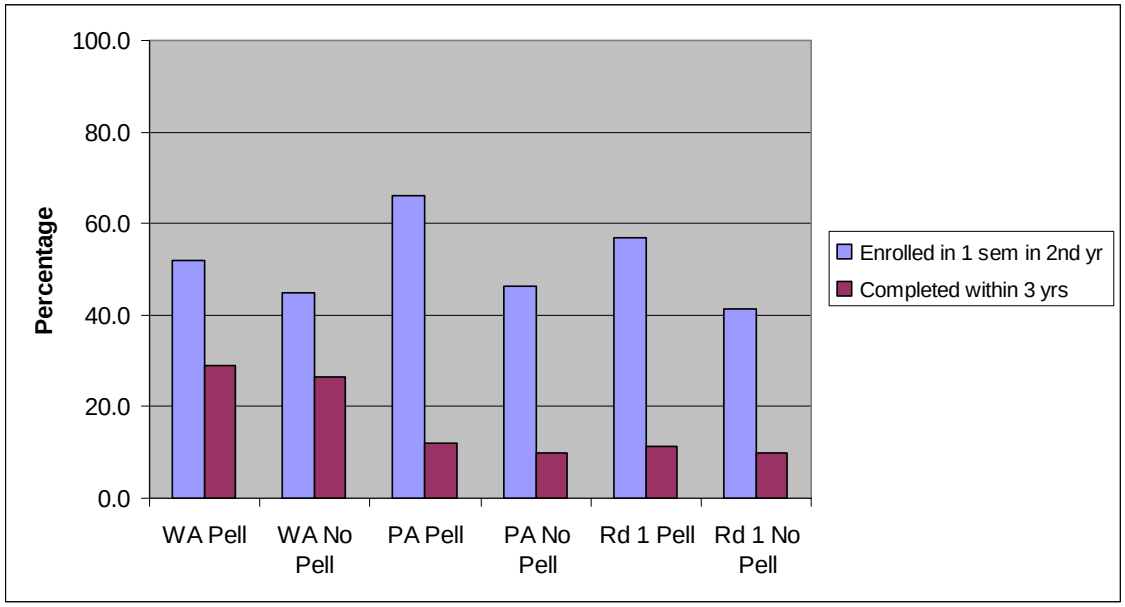


Figure 2.17

Comparison of Persistence and Completion by Pell Status



Race and Ethnicity

Achieving the Dream is particularly concerned about student groups that have faced the greatest barriers to success in college. Colleges are expected to identify and work toward closing any substantial gaps in performance on the five indicators among these groups of students, such as racial or ethnic minorities. Table B.4 shows the average institutional rates for the 17 performance measures as analyzed by race and ethnicity for PA and WA colleges.

The average institutional rates for successful completion of developmental courses and gatekeeper courses were lower on many of the measures for African-Americans, Hispanics, and Native Americans than for whites. PA colleges had more gaps on these measures than WA colleges, and in both states the completion rates for developmental and gatekeeper math had the most differences across race and ethnicity when compared with whites. In WA, whites and African-Americans had similar rates of completion for developmental English and reading. In these same two developmental subject areas, Hispanics in WA had higher rates of completion (50 percent for English and 25 percent for reading) than whites (37 percent for English and 21 percent for reading).

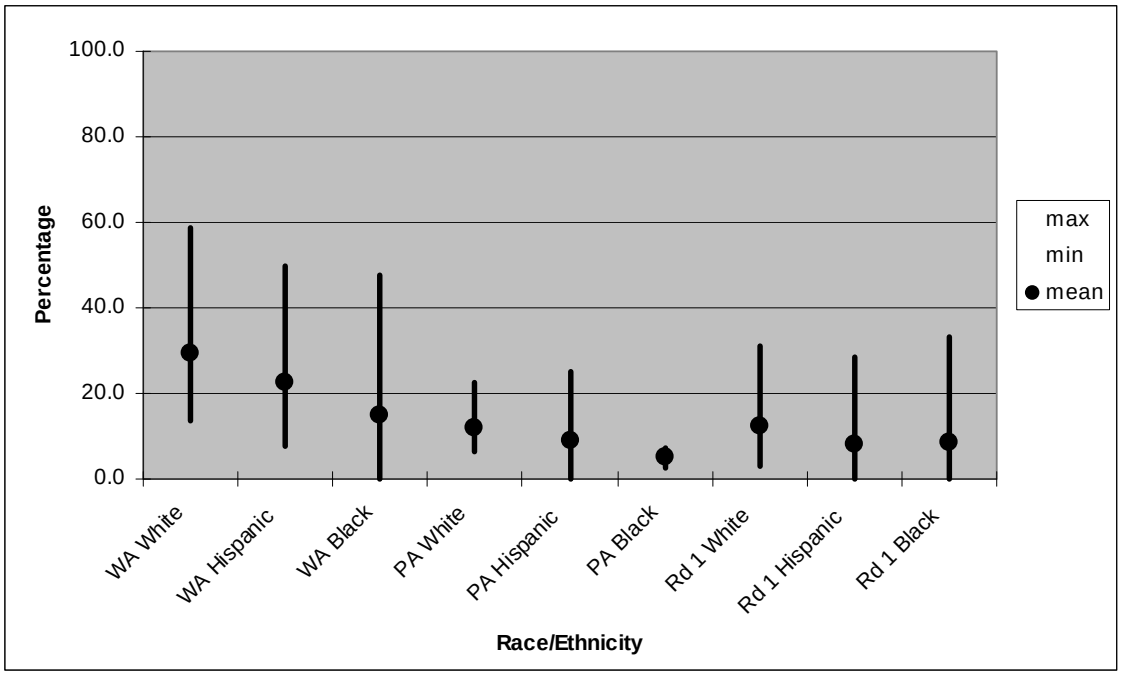
In PA, all of the minority groups had lower average rates than whites for completion of gatekeeper math and English courses. While the same was true of gatekeeper math in WA (with the exception of Asians), a major difference between the two states was completion of gatekeeper English. In WA, Asians, African-Americans, Hispanics, and Native Americans all had higher rates of completion in gatekeeper English than whites.

Across both PA and WA colleges, the rates of successful course completion were lower for African-Americans, Hispanics, and Native Americans than for whites — a gap also present among Round 1 colleges. There were also gaps in average rates for the measures of persistence in both PA and WA. Hence, course completion and persistence for minority students are areas where colleges in both states need to focus their efforts in identifying barriers and closing achievement gaps. By addressing disparities in attainment among particular student groups, colleges will likely see institution-wide improvements in student success.

Average completion rates were highest in WA for minority students, whereas PA and Round 1 colleges exhibited similar, lower average rates (Figure 2.18). While WA had the highest minority student completion rates, it also had the greatest achievement gaps when comparing rates for Hispanics (22 percent) and African-Americans (15 percent) with whites (30 percent). WA colleges also exhibited the greatest range of completion rates for whites, Hispanics, and African-Americans.

Figure 2.18

Completion Within Three Years for Selected Race/Ethnic Groups



Much has been written about low levels of educational attainment among African-American and Hispanic men.[7] The completion rates for both PA and WA colleges showed these patterns of differences, with African-American and Hispanic males completing within three years at average rates that are lower than black and Hispanic females and black and Hispanic students generally. Tables B.5 and B.6 show institutional averages of the Achieving the Dream performance measures for females and males as analyzed by race and ethnicity. It is also interesting to note that comparisons between white students by gender and African-American and Hispanic students by gender for both PA and WA on average rates of completion show that there were greater differences between comparisons of the female groups than the male groups, with the exception of Hispanic females. The largest of these differences occurred among African-American and Hispanic women in WA. White women completed within three years at an average rate of 32 percent, while African-American and Hispanic women both completed at an average rate of about 16 percent (Figure 2.19). This 16 percent difference is higher than the difference for both African-American and Hispanic males when compared with

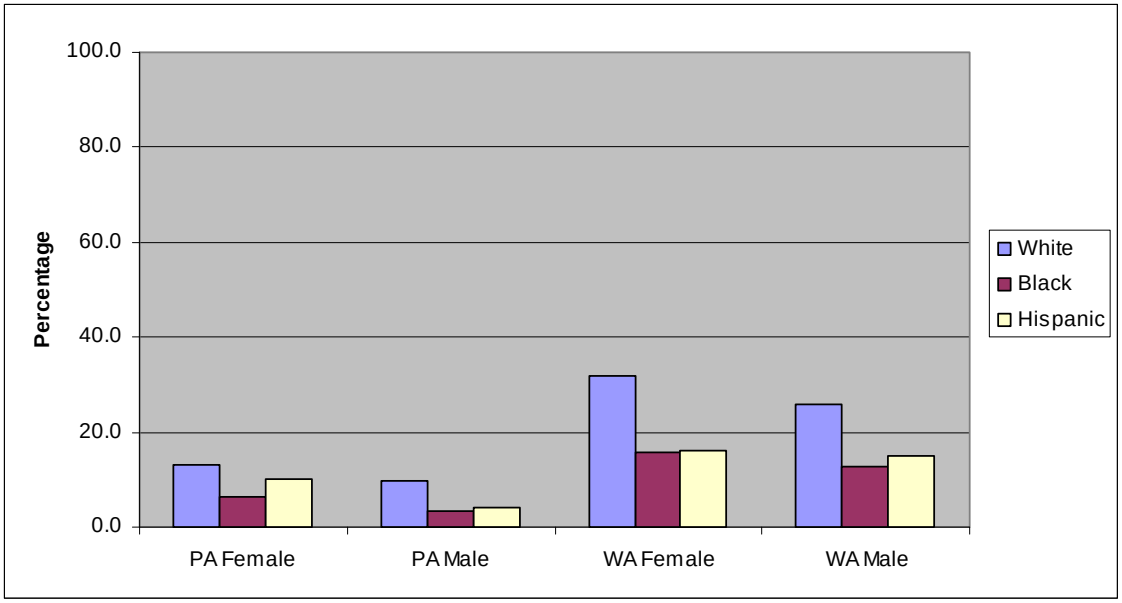
[7]See, for example, Ashburn (2006); Cameron and Heckman (2001).

white males in WA. These patterns suggest that colleges need to continue to closely analyze their disaggregated data to identify appropriate strategies for closing the gaps based on student characteristics.

Achieving the Dream: Community Colleges Count

Figure 2.19

Completion Within Three Years by Gender for Selected Race/Ethnic Groups



Summary

Despite differences in the structure and oversight of the community college systems in PA and WA, the Achieving the Dream colleges from the two states exhibited similar average rates of performance on the Achieving the Dream measures prior to joining the initiative. The measures show that, on average, many students at these colleges are struggling academically. As the figures in this chapter illustrate, there was often greater variation among colleges within each state on many of the measures than there was when comparing the average rates of the two states. This difference indicates that individual colleges are entering the initiative with varying levels of student success. The baseline data alone do not provide enough information to determine the extent to which the variation among colleges is due to differences in institutional performance or differences in the readiness of the students served.

The average institutional rates for PA and WA colleges were generally low in all measures prior to the start of the initiative. It is expected that colleges that are successful in implementing large-scale student success strategies under Achieving the Dream will see improvements on the performance indicators. Such colleges should also be able to ameliorate the often substantial gaps in performance among minority students compared with whites.

Overall, the baseline performance of the PA and WA colleges was similar to that of the Round 1 colleges. Therefore, it may be possible to determine if PA and WA colleges are able to make faster progress than the Round 1 colleges in improving student outcomes.

Chapter 3

Patterns of Data Use by Faculty

Introduction

This chapter presents findings from the survey that CCRC and MDRC conducted in late 2008 on the use of data by faculty and administrators at all the Achieving the Dream colleges.[8] In particular, it summarizes key findings from the survey on patterns of data use in the Achieving the Dream colleges in Pennsylvania and Washington. The focus here is on data use by faculty, given the central interest of Achieving the Dream in engaging faculty in using evidence to improve teaching, although we also report responses to questions asked of administrators about use of data in their colleges generally. We were particularly interested in the extent to which faculty examine and use data on student progression and outcomes, such as developmental course completion rates and rates of persistence and graduation. Also of interest was how frequently faculty participated in organized discussions with other faculty on strategies for improving student success.

In addition to presenting descriptive statistics, we report the results of analyses that compare the responses of the PA and WA colleges with each other and with those of the colleges that joined the initiative in the first round.[9] We hypothesized that because the first-round colleges had been involved in Achieving the Dream for two more years than the PA and WA colleges at the time of the survey, the extent to which faculty in the Round 1 colleges used data would be greater than that of faculty at the PA and WA colleges.

Extent of Use of Data by Faculty

Frequency of Data Use by Type

Table 3.1 shows the percentages of faculty at the PA, WA, and Round 1 colleges, respectively, who indicated using or reviewing particular sorts of information at least once a

[8] A more extensive discussion of the survey findings is presented in a report by CCRC and MDRC; see Jenkins and Kerrigan (2009).

[9] The detailed results of these differences in means tests are not presented in this report. Given that the responses to the survey questions examined here were not normally distributed, we used the Mann-Whitney-Wilcoxon rank sum test instead of standard difference in means tests to identify those items on which faculty in either the PA or WA or Round 1 colleges or the Round 1 or Round 3 (PA and WA) colleges scored consistently higher than the comparison group. Given that we were conducting tests for large number of items, we used the Bonferroni adjusted level of significance and a conservative p-value ($p < .001$) to measure statistical differences.

year, as well as the percentage who said that they never use a given type of information. Not surprisingly, high percentages of faculty at the three groups of colleges reviewed or used grades and course evaluations at least once a year. An unexpected finding is the fact that at least once a year more than half the faculty at all three groups used data on placement test scores, retention rates, and graduation rates. More than half the faculty at WA and Round 1 colleges, and nearly half at PA colleges, used measures of student learning other than grades at least annually. Still, over a third of faculty never used such measures, and nearly a third never reviewed data on student achievement gaps among different student groups. Over 40 percent used information broken down by students' race or ethnicity at least once a year, although a smaller percentage of faculty used data broken down by student income levels or receipt of financial aid at least once a year. This is not surprising because colleges generally do not have a reliable way to collect income data for all of their students, other than those who apply for financial aid.

Table 3.1

Frequency of Faculty Members' Use or Review of Various Data Types

Type of Information	Percentage of Faculty Using the Given Information Type*					
	At Least Once per Year			Never		
	PA	WA	Round 1	PA	WA	Round 1
Placement test scores	69.1	73.6	68.2	24.1	20.9	24.5
Enrollment data	84.0	90.7	87.6	10.9	6.8	8.6
Grades	91.0	86.7	90.3	6.0	9.2	7.0
Course evaluations	81.7	89.6	91.9	7.2	3.4	5.1
Measures of student learning other than grades	47.7	54.6	57.0	40.2	34.4	32.4
Retention rates	63.4	69.0	75.7	21.9	19.1	15.6
Graduation rates	61.1	57.4	67.4	23.5	27.2	21.4
Transfer rates	49.0	41.0	46.8	32.3	36.8	36.4
Percentage of students successfully completing developmental education	44.5	42.2	50.2	39.0	42.5	36.3
Financial aid	19.6	37.2	40.0	65.6	49.7	48.1
College budget and finances	36.3	56.8	54.8	47.0	30.0	32.1
Results from external surveys	36.1	30.6	46.5	43.4	47.9	35.5
Focus groups or other qualitative data	41.1	37.8	40.3	36.4	34.2	38.1
Research by the college	63.6	49.5	58.4	17.5	24.7	22.0
Outside research on effective practices	71.2	70.1	68.0	14.9	13.8	17.6
Data on student achievement gaps	49.7	54.2	50.2	29.1	30.9	31.4
Information broken down by students' race or ethnicity	40.6	53.5	47.4	41.0	27.4	35.9
Information broken down by students' income levels or receipt of financial aid	23.6	35.0	34.5	59.1	46.3	50.6

* "Type of Information Not Available" responses were treated as missing.

NOTE: Shaded rows indicate the types of data whose use is promoted by Achieving the Dream.

Analyzing the differences between the responses to these questions (not reported here), the Jenkins and Kerrigan report found that the WA colleges scored significantly higher than the PA colleges in the frequency with which faculty used data broken down by students' race or ethnicity and data disaggregated by students' income level. The finding regarding race and ethnicity may stem from the fact that some of the PA colleges had few minority students. Faculty at Round 1 colleges were significantly more likely that those at the PA and WA colleges to indicate that they used data on retention and graduation rates frequently. The report found a similar pattern in the broader analysis of the survey results where we compared the means across the PA, WA, and Round 1 colleges of composite measures of the use of data by faculty and administrators. As was pointed out in report, this finding is consistent with the hypothesis that colleges that had been involved in Achieving the Dream longer would be more advanced in their use of data for improving student success. However, the findings are merely suggestive; they cannot be seen as definitive evidence of a causal relationship between Achieving the Dream and more extensive use of data for improvement.

Perceived Usefulness of Data by Type

A majority of faculty at the PA, WA, and Round 1 colleges found most of the types of information presented in Table 3.2 at least somewhat useful in their jobs. This is true even for data on the percentage of students successfully completing developmental education, a surprising finding given that we surveyed faculty across disciplines, not just in developmental programs. Over two thirds of faculty also found data on student achievement gaps useful. Achieving the Dream may have helped to increase awareness and use of this information among faculty, since faculty and administrators who participated in Achieving the Dream activities at their colleges were, not surprisingly, more likely to use data on student outcomes. However, these findings simply show correlation, not causation, so we cannot definitively attribute these patterns to Achieving the Dream.

Two thirds of the faculty at the PA and Round 1 colleges (and nearly as high a percentage at WA colleges) indicated that research reports and other information that their college provided were generally helpful to their work as teachers. Nearly 80 percent of the faculty at PA, WA, and Round 1 colleges found outside research on effective practices useful in their roles as teachers.

Table 3.2

Faculty Members' Perception of the Usefulness of Various Types of Information to Their Job

Type of Information	Percentage of Faculty Members Indicating Type of Info is "Somewhat Useful" to "Very Useful"*		
	PA	**WA**	**Round 1**
Placement test scores	71.4	74.2	75.0
Enrollment data	68.1	75.1	77.3
Grades	83.0	79.5	86.5
Course evaluations	88.8	91.1	89.9
Measures of student learning other than grades	69.8	71.9	70.9
Retention rates	76.0	80.3	82.2
Graduation rates	65.9	65.9	73.3
Transfer rates	65.8	58.8	66.4
Percentage of students successfully completing developmental education	60.4	59.0	65.9
Financial aid	29.0	43.1	45.7
College budget and finances	36.1	48.6	55.3
Results from external surveys	52.3	43.8	57.0
Focus groups or other qualitative data	62.2	60.2	59.9
Research by the college	66.6	60.2	68.3
Outside research on effective practices	79.5	79.6	78.8
Data on student achievement gaps	69.2	67.3	69.9
Information broken down by students' race or ethnicity	52.3	58.1	48.5
Information broken down by students' income levels or receipt of financial aid	43.2	49.2	45.9

* "Not Applicable" responses were treated as missing.

There were few differences on average in the extent to which faculty at the PA, WA, and Round 1 colleges valued the various types of information in Table 3.2. Faculty at PA

colleges found information on financial aid and college budgets and finances less useful than did those at WA and Round 1 colleges, but that is probably because PA faculty generally used such data less than did WA and Round 1 faculty (Table 3.1). Faculty at Round 1 colleges were more likely to indicate that they found the results of external surveys such as the Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE) more useful in their roles as teachers.

Use of Data and Research by Faculty in Teaching-Related Decisions

As is evident from Table 3.3, the majority of faculty surveyed used data and research at least to some extent in decisions related to teaching. Around one in five indicated that they were heavy users of data and research for teaching decisions. A smaller percentage said that they used data and research "not at all" in teaching-related decisions.

Table 3.3

Extent of Use by Faculty of Data and Research on Students for Teaching-Related Decisions

Decision Type	Percentage of Faculty Who Used Data and Research for the Given Decision Type								
	At Least Some			A Lot			Not at All		
	PA	WA	R1	PA	WA	R1	PA	WA	R1
Curriculum	73.5	77.8	76.7	18.6	18.0	18.2	16.2	12.4	13.8
Teaching practices	79.9	83.0	82.8	25.3	21.1	24.6	10.3	9.3	8.5
Advising students	79.0	79.1	81.7	21.8	19.6	24.7	12.1	12.14	10.8
Identifying students who are struggling academically	76.9	74.2	79.7	22.1	20.9	22.7	11.1	13.4	10.7

There were no statistically significant differences in the responses to these questions between the PA and WA and Round 3 and Round 1 colleges.

Participation in Organized Discussions on Improving Student Success

Three quarters or more of faculty at the PA, WA, and Round 1 colleges indicated that they participated at least once a year in organized discussions on improving students' academic achievement or on closing achievement gaps (Table 3.4). Somewhat smaller percentages — but still majorities — reported participating in discussions about the needs or performance of students of color or of low-income students in particular.

Table 3.4

Frequency of Participation by Faculty Members in Organized Discussions at the College on Topics Related to Improving Student Success

Topic of Discussion	Percentage of Faculty Participating in Discussions on the Given Topic					
	At Least Once per Year			Never		
	PA	WA	R1	PA	WA	R1
Improving academic achievement or closing achievement gaps	81.3	74.7	77.7	7.1	10.6	10.0
Academic needs or performance of students of color	58.6	64.3	53.3	23.0	18.6	29.7
Academic needs or performance of low-income students	53.1	60.8	55.6	13.4	22.9	26.3

Faculty at the PA and WA colleges were significantly more likely than those at Round 1 colleges to indicate that they participated frequently in organized discussions about improving the academic performance of students of color. This difference might reflect the fact that at the time of the survey, the PA and WA colleges had recently completed the Achieving the Dream planning year, when colleges were strongly encouraged to examine gaps in achievement among students grouped by race and ethnicity and other characteristics. Still, the differences between the colleges by round were fairly small.

Use of Data by Academic Departments

Most faculty responding to the survey indicated that they were in departments that used data and research for programmatic decisions at least to some extent (Table 3.5). Approximately

one fourth were in departments that were heavy users of data to make program decisions. Only a small percentage of the faculty respondents were in departments that did not make use of data and research for such decisions. The pattern of responses to these questions was similar among the PA, WA, and Round 1 colleges.

Table 3.5

Extent of Use by Faculty Members of Data and Research on Students by Department in Decision Making About Selected Issues

Issues	Percentage of Faculty Whose Department Uses Data and Research for Decisions on the Given Topic (Question asked of faculty only)*								
	At Least Some			A lot			Not at All		
	PA	WA	R1	PA	WA	R1	PA	WA	R1
Curriculum	75.2	77.0	81.0	23.3	21.1	27.0	13.4	10.7	10.5
Teaching practices	78.2	80.8	82.8	19.0	21.2	24.3	11.8	9.6	8.9
Tutoring or other academic support	76.9	76.2	81.0	21.1	17.1	24.0	13.1	10.1	9.6
Program planning	78.8	83.0	84.4	23.9	24.9	26.2	9.3	7.8	7.1
Academic program review or evaluation	80.3	83.5	86.2	25.4	22.7	28.5	8.0	8.7	6.1
Long-term strategic planning	75.1	78.5	82.6	18.8	18.7	24.5	12.2	8.9	7.7
Budgeting or resource allocation	58.9	66.7	75.8	12.2	14.2	20.1	23.2	13.5	12.3
Identifying and redesigning high-failure-rate courses	63.4	65.0	74.9	18.1	18.1	23.3	19.7	19.2	12.8

* "Don't Know" responses treated as missing.

The broader analysis of the survey results from the PA, WA, and Round 1 colleges by Jenkins and Kerrigan found that the frequency with which faculty members used data in decision making varied by department. Faculty in general education were on average significantly less likely than faculty in other program areas to use data on student outcomes and

to use data and research in decisions related to their teaching on a frequent basis. In contrast, faculty who taught in developmental or for-credit occupational programs were more likely than those in other fields to do so. Developmental faculty members were also significantly more likely to participate in organized discussions on student achievement and to use data disaggregated by race, ethnicity, or income. Adult basic education faculty used data no more frequently than faculty in other areas. Interestingly, even though they were more likely than faculty in other areas to use data in teaching-related decisions, faculty in for-credit occupational programs were less likely to participate in organized discussions about student achievement or to use data broken down by race, ethnicity, or income.

Accessibility of Data and Perceived Barriers to Data Use

Sources of Data on Students

Faculty at the Achieving the Dream colleges indicated that they used a variety of sources or methods to get information on groups of students (Table 3.6). Faculty at WA colleges were significantly less likely than those at PA and Round 1 colleges to do searches themselves using their college's student information system or their college's website or fact book. This difference is likely due to the problems that the WA community and technical colleges had in retrieving data from the legacy information system they shared. Efforts to upgrade or replace that system have been going on for several years now and have not yet been completed. About a third of faculty at the PA, WA, and Round 1 colleges indicated that they generally did not need information about groups of students.

Table 3.6

Sources of Information Used by Faculty on Groups of Students

Source	Percentage of Faculty Indicating That They Used the Given Source*		
	PA	WA	Round 1
Searches using the college's student information system	34.5	14.5	37.0
Data from the college's website or fact book	28.6	21.2	32.9
Reports distributed by the college's institutional research (IR) office or other departments	32.4	32.4	32.9
Requests to the IR or information technology (IT) staff	34.3	33.2	31.0
My department's database	20.7	29.3	24.0
State databases or research reports	8.7	11.1	9.6
I generally do not need information about groups of students	33.1	33.4	32.2

* Respondents were asked to select "all that apply."

Accessibility and Quality of Information and Research

A majority of faculty at the PA, WA, and Round 1 colleges indicated that they were able to access information they needed in a timely manner and that the information they received was accurate, although faculty from the WA colleges were less satisfied with their access to data (Table 3.7). WA college faculty were also significantly less satisfied than faculty at the PA and Round 1 colleges that the reports they received from the college were clear and easy to follow, and were provided in a timely fashion. Faculty at about half of the PA and Round 1 colleges indicated that their college's institutional research function was adequately staffed to meet the demand for information, compared with a third of WA college faculty. Our fieldwork in WA indicated that at least some colleges were having trouble recruiting qualified IR staff for the salaries that the colleges were able to offer. PA college faculty were significantly more likely than those in WA and Round 1 colleges to indicate that their college's institutional research staff was responsive to requests for information. More than half of the PA and Round 1 faculty, and 44 percent of the WA faculty, indicated that the research reports and other information their college provided were generally helpful to their work as teachers.

Table 3.7

Perceptions Among Faculty Members

About the Accuracy and Availability of Data and Research

Perception	Percentage of Faculty Indicating They "Agree" to "Strongly Agree"		
	PA	WA	Round 1
The data in the college's student information system are generally accurate and error free.	70.2	57.8	63.3
The data I need are generally available in a user-friendly format.	58.7	47.3	60.3
The college's institutional research staff is responsive to requests for information.	80.4	64.0	68.1
The college's institutional research staff is adequately staffed for the college's information and research needs.	49.9	33.1	53.0
The reports and other information the college provides to administrators and faculty are typically clear and easy to follow.	66.9	53.7	63.7
I am able to obtain the information I need in a timely fashion.	69.8	50.7	62.8
The research reports and other information the college provides to faculty are generally helpful to our work as teachers.	52.3	44.7	53.5

Perceived Barriers to Use

As shown in Table 3.8, around a third of the faculty at the PA, WA, and Round 1 colleges indicated that one reason that they did not use data and research was that they were too busy with their teaching responsibilities. Other than that, most faculty members indicated that using data and research on students was part of their responsibility as faculty and that they had the skills needed to analyze data. Between 20 and 27 percent of faculty said that the data available were not relevant to their jobs. The responses of faculty on these items were similar across the PA, WA, and Round 1 colleges.

Table 3.8

Reasons Given by Faculty for not Using Data and Research on Students

Reason	Percentage of Faculty Indicating They "Agree" to "Strongly Agree"		
	PA	WA	Round 1
I am too busy with my teaching responsibilities.	30.4	37.9	31.0
It is not part of my responsibilities as a faculty member/administrator.	14.3	10.4	13.8
I do not have the research skills to understand and use data and research.	13.4	16.6	17.5
I do not trust the data that are available.	12.9	18.0	16.9
The data that are available are not relevant to my role as a faculty member/administrator.	21.2	27.0	20.1

Training for Data Use

The percentage of faculty who indicated that they had been involved in training or professional development on institutional research or data analysis in the past year ranged from 28 percent for the WA college faculty to 39 percent for the Round 1 college faculty (Table 3.9). The difference in responses between the Round 3 (PA and WA) and Round 1 colleges is statistically significant. Over half of the faculty at the PA, WA, and Round 1 colleges said that they participated in training or professional development on program evaluation or assessment. The broader analysis of the survey data in the Jenkins and Kerrigan report found, not surprisingly, that faculty who had recently participated in training or professional development in either of these topics were more likely to use data in their work. However, as was pointed out in that report, this finding does not necessarily mean that colleges could increase data use by increasing the amount of training provided, since it is possible that faculty and administrators who were heavier users of data were more likely to seek out training in data use.

Table 3.9

Involvement by Faculty in Training or Other Professional Development in the Past Year

Topic	Percentage of Faculty Indicating That They Participated in the Given Training in the Past Year		
	PA	WA	Round 1
Institutional research and/or data analysis	30.5	28.1	38.7
Program evaluation and/or assessment	60.9	62.4	55.7

Use of Data in Decision Making

The survey asked administrators at the PA, WA, and Round 1 colleges to assess how much their college used data and research on students in decision making. As is evident from Table 3.10, the majority of respondents indicated that their college used data and research on students in decision making on program and planning issues at least to some extent. A third or more indicated that their college used data and research extensively. Only a small fraction indicated that their college did not use data and research in decision making. There were no significant differences in the ranking of responses from administrators across the PA, WA, and Round 1 colleges.

Table 3.10

Extent of College's Use of Data and Research on Students in Decision Making

Decision Type	Percentage of Administrators Indicating Use of Data and Research by Their College for Decisions on the Given Topic*								
	At Least Some			A Lot			Not at All		
	PA	WA	R1	PA	WA	R1	PA	WA	R1
Curriculum	91.1	85.7	86.7	37.6	21.1	30.0	4.1	2.3	5.1
Program planning	91.4	90.5	88.7	37.1	25.9	31.7	3.0	0.7	4.6
Academic program review or evaluation	91.7	87.5	89.2	41.2	31.3	34.6	3.0	0.7	3.9
Long-term strategic planning	92.5	88.2	88.3	44.6	29.4	36.6	3.2	0.7	3.8
Budgeting and resource allocation	89.0	86.5	86.2	40.3	29.7	34.9	4.2	0.7	5.1
Identifying areas for improvement at the college	90.7	89.4	89.4	41.3	32.5	37.5	2.7	0.6	3.2

* Question asked of administrators only.

In a question not reflected in Table 3.10, the vast majority of administrators across the three sets of colleges (91 percent) also indicated that their college used data on student outcomes (e.g., persistence, learning, degree attainment), not just enrollments, to evaluate academic programs and departments. A similar percentage (92.5 percent) indicated that each department or division in their college was required to set measurable goals and objectives as part of the planning process. Three fourths of administrators said that budget requests at their college must be supported by evidence that students would benefit as a result.

In the Jenkins and Kerrigan broader analysis of the survey data, we found a surprisingly weak correlation between the extent to which administrators indicated that their college used data and research for program-related decisions and the frequency with which they themselves used data for decision making. This finding might be attributable to the fact that the administrator respondents included individuals working in areas not related to academics, who are probably less likely to use data as part of their jobs. Still, the survey also showed only a weak correlation between indicators of data use by individual faculty members and the extent to

which faculty indicated that their college overall used data on student outcomes to evaluate programs. Even weaker was the correlation between faculty data use and faculty members' perceptions about the level of commitment by the college's leadership to making decisions based on data and the clarity of the leadership's vision on how to increase student academic success. These findings and the earlier ones about the variation in departmental practices suggest that the practices of individual academic departments have a greater bearing on the use of data by faculty members than do those of the college overall.

As argued in the Jenkins and Kerrigan report on the overall analysis of the findings from the survey, the apparent disconnect between the extent of data use by faculty and administrators and the views and management practices of the college's leadership calls into question a central premise of Achieving the Dream: that commitment by a college's leadership and the way that a college approaches program evaluation, strategic planning, and budgeting are key to encouraging the use of data for improvement by college personnel. Survey findings suggest that leadership commitment and a data-oriented approach to institutional management may not be sufficient to encourage faculty and administrators to become more data-oriented in practice. Additional efforts at the department level are probably needed to change the behavior of faculty in particular. Indeed, we found that faculty in developmental education departments and for-credit occupational programs were more frequent users of data than were faculty in other types of departments, particularly those in general education. The greater intensity of data use in developmental education departments is perhaps not surprising given that improving developmental instruction has been a major focus of Achieving the Dream. The baseline evaluation of the first-round Achieving the Dream colleges found that the vast majority of participating colleges, if not all of them, were implementing some sort of strategy aimed at improving developmental outcomes.[10] It may well be that a similar intensive focus on improving outcomes is needed to change practices and to influence the culture in other types of departments.

Summary

Most faculty members indicated that using data and research on students was part of their responsibility as faculty and that they had the skills needed to analyze data. A surprisingly high proportion of faculty in the PA, WA, and Round 1 colleges used data on student outcomes on a regular basis, but nearly one in three never reviewed data on student achievement gaps among different student groups.

A majority of faculty at the PA, WA, and Round 1 colleges found data on student progression and achievement gaps at least somewhat useful in their jobs. Not surprisingly,

[10]Brock et al. (2007).

faculty who participated in Achieving the Dream activities at their colleges were more likely to find information on student outcomes useful and to use it in their jobs.

The frequency with which faculty in the PA, WA, and Round 1 colleges used data for decision making varied by department, with those in general education on average less likely to use data on student outcomes in their work, while faculty in developmental and for-credit occupational programs were more frequent users of data and research.

We found a much stronger relationship between data use by individual faculty and the extent to which their department used data on students for decision making than between faculty data use and the extent to which the college overall used data on student outcomes to evaluate programs and make decisions at the leadership level. Hence, commitment by top college leaders to data-based decision making and a data-oriented approach to institutional management may not be sufficient to encourage faculty to become more data-oriented in practice. Additional efforts at the department level are probably needed to change faculty behavior.

Faculty at the Round 1 colleges were significantly more likely than those in the PA and WA colleges to indicate that they use data on retention and graduation rates frequently. This is consistent with the hypothesis that colleges that have been involved in Achieving the Dream longer should be more advanced in their use of data for improving student success. However, this finding cannot be seen as definitive evidence of a causal relationship between Achieving the Dream and more extensive use of data for improvement. CCRC and MDRC will have better evidence with which to examine the effect of Achieving the Dream on data use when we conduct a follow-up survey of faculty and administrators in the PA and WA colleges in two years, near the end of their participation in the initiative.

Chapter 4

College Progress on the Initial Steps in the Process of Institutional Improvement

Introduction

During the planning year, colleges in Achieving the Dream are expected to begin carrying out the first three steps of the initiative's five-step institutional improvement process. These steps are designed to engage college personnel in identifying areas where students are experiencing barriers to success and designing strategies to break down those barriers. These first three steps are:

(1) Commit to improving student outcomes.

(2) Use data to identify and prioritize problems.

(3) Engage stakeholders in developing strategies for addressing priority problems.

This chapter examines the progress that the PA and WA Achieving the Dream colleges made in implementing these three steps during their planning year (2006-07) and in the first year of implementation (2007-08). The chapter begins by examining the commitment of college leadership to the initiative and includes a description of how presidents and senior administrations organized and managed the initiative. It then explores how closely the colleges followed the initiative's recommended process for identifying student achievement gaps and other problem areas. The chapter concludes by discussing the involvement of both internal and external college stakeholders in developing strategies to improve student outcomes. The progress of the colleges on step 4 (implement, evaluate, and improve strategies) and step 5 (institutionalize effective policies and practices) are discussed in Chapters 5 and 6, respectively.

Step 1: Commit to Improving Student Outcomes

The first step in the Achieving the Dream process for institutional improvement is for the college's leadership to make a clear commitment to improve student outcomes, not just to increase enrollments. The Achieving the Dream framing paper, which provides the conceptual framework for the initiative, describes the role of college leaders as follows:

> Institutional change succeeds when leaders frame inspirational values, engage others to bring the college's actions into alignment with those values, and institutionalize policies and practices that bring about positive results.[11]

College leaders are expected to make the improvement of student outcomes a college priority and to communicate that priority to both internal and external college stakeholders. Leadership support for the initiative sends a signal to faculty and staff that Achieving the Dream is more than just another grant-funded project, and thereby encourages broad-based understanding and participation. Leadership commitment to the Achieving the Dream change process also implies a willingness to support changes in college policies and procedures and to make the resource investments necessary for improving student success, even in the face of competing interests and potential resistance from college stakeholders.

Senior Leadership Commitment to Improving Outcomes

Senior leadership across the 13 PA and WA colleges was committed to making the improvement of student success — particularly for low-income students and students of color — a college priority. College presidents and senior administrators described a variety of ongoing efforts on their campuses to improve student outcomes, many of which were being funded through grants from federal programs such as TRIO, Title III, and Title V. College leadership at 10 of the 13 colleges indicated that they would likely use Achieving the Dream as a framework for current and future student success efforts. For example, the president of a WA college that made the initiative a college priority said:

> The types of student interventions that we are trying [to use] to affect student success are important to us. Achieving the Dream was helpful in pulling together all our interventions and activities to improve retention, throughput, and ultimately student success.

Across all 13 PA and WA colleges, college leadership demonstrated a willingness to reallocate resources to improve student outcomes, including the hiring of additional institutional researchers. At the outset of the initiative, all but one of the presidents supported expansion of the use of data as a means to improve student outcomes and reduce achievement gaps. This president, with the encouragement of senior administrators and the college's Achieving the Dream coach and data facilitator, became a supporter of data-driven decision making by the end of the first implementation year (2007-08).

Eleven of the 13 college presidents were actively engaged in Achieving the Dream activities and were visible advocates for the initiative on their campuses, including regular

[11]MDC (2006), p. 3.

participation in core team planning. Most presidents tapped senior administrators to lead the implementation of initiative, and they all kept their board of directors regularly updated on initiative activities throughout both the planning year and the first implementation year. At about half of the colleges, the research team found that direct presidential involvement was key to overall progress of the initiative. In other cases, colleges were able to make progress under the direction of senior administrators to whom the president had delegated responsibility for the Achieving the Dream work.

Impact of Leadership Turnover on Commitment to Achieving the Dream

The departure of a president or of senior administrators can threaten the leadership of college initiatives, as new leaders often shift college priorities according to their own agendas. One college applied to become an Achieving the Dream college during the president's first year at the institution (2005-06), and another two colleges had presidents who left after joining the initiative. In all three cases, the new presidents embraced the initiative and indicated continued leadership commitment to the initiative. One of them expressed his enthusiasm for the initiative's emphasis on building a culture of evidence to help disadvantaged students be successful:

> I think it is one mechanism for really focusing attention on individuals who are disadvantaged and need the kinds of opportunities that a community college provides…. It has awakened our faculty to understand that our population needs more opportunities…. Achieving the Dream is giving us a new way to look at ways to meet the needs of students and opening our eyes to a culture of evidence and the importance of assessment. We have to do more and more of that. It has the potential for far-reaching importance.

The research team found that each of the three new presidents was a more forceful advocate of using data for institutional improvement than his or her predecessor. One, who suggested that the initiative would provide data that would inform the college's strategic planning, was committed to improving student outcomes and was particularly focused on improving student success rates in developmental education. He embraced the initiative's focus on student outcomes data, saying:

> We had no data about students. Achieving the Dream for a new college president faced with challenges was a gift from God, a bully pulpit — [and I] didn't even need to bully. Faculty and staff were eager to make changes, but never had been given permission. Achieving the Dream gave us a structure: to be methodical, to substantiate what we knew. It changed the culture from making assumptions to making decisions.

While presidential commitment to the initiative did not falter in the midst of leadership turnover at the colleges, the research team did find that a change in leadership delayed implementation of the initiative at a couple of the colleges. For example, administrators and faculty at one college were reluctant to commit to working on the initiative because frequent presidential turnover there had made them apprehensive about changing leadership priorities. An administrator at one college said that as a result of the leadership turnover: "Everything is up in the air. Nothing is definitive. Hopefully something can take place. Everything has been uncertain."

Incentives for Leadership Commitment

Achieving the Dream, in seeking to change the culture of community colleges and make long-lasting improvements in institutional practices, expects college personnel to invest significant time and effort. College leadership clearly welcomed the funds attached to the initiative, yet presidential commitment to the initiative was not driven by the money. None of the 13 college presidents suggested that the initiative's grant money was an incentive for the college to participate. Indeed, almost half of the colleges had already invested a substantial amount of their own funds in the initiative by the time of our visit. As mentioned in Chapter 1, one PA college used its own resources to fund its participation. The factors that did encourage presidents and senior administrators to support and promote the initiative at their colleges are described below.

Consistency with college goals

Presidents at each of the 13 colleges viewed Achieving the Dream as consistent with institutional goals and current efforts to improve student success. The boards of trustees at all of the colleges had made a commitment to improve student outcomes, and the initiative was viewed as consistent with board priorities. The view of one college president in PA was typical. This president had made student success a centerpiece of her administration prior to the college's involvement with Achieving the Dream. Under her leadership, the college was looking at a broad range of issues related to student success, including developmental education, instructor grading policies, first-year experience, and student services. The president viewed Achieving the Dream as a natural fit with the student success agenda she was spearheading at the college.

Involvement with a high-profile national initiative

Participation in a high-profile, national initiative was another incentive for leadership support for Achieving the Dream. Several college leaders discussed how joining Round 3 of the initiative gave their institutions additional status, and they were proud that their schools were

selected to participate. Other college presidents focused on the support the initiative provided to colleges to improve student outcomes. The president of one PA college said: "For us, Achieving the Dream is not about the money. It's about having the backing of a prestigious outside initiative." This president said that joining a national student success initiative had enabled the college to have conversations with faculty and staff about student outcomes without creating the perception that the administration was blaming the faculty for poor student outcomes. The president said, "Achieving the Dream is a way to have a conversation by having someone out of house asking the questions, asking us to look at the data. That's better than trying to have that conversation in-house." A president in WA expressed a similar sentiment:

> The other piece that was helpful to our college and community was to have an external entity say that it was important to serve the neediest and that there were parts of the community that weren't being served. Having an external group saying that consistently helps us focus.

Several college presidents used the Achieving the Dream coaches and data facilitators to engage faculty and staff in conversations about achievement gaps among subgroups of their students. The coaches and data facilitators were able to present poor student outcomes as an issue confronting colleges across the country, rather than as the fault of one particular institution. Several college leaders and senior administrators suggested that conversations about poor student outcomes would have been more difficult without the support of the initiative.

Provision of a roadmap to achieve college goals

The majority of college presidents and senior administrators indicated that Achieving the Dream provided a helpful roadmap to improve student performance and close the achievement gap at their institutions. For example, the president of a PA college was using Achieving the Dream to increase faculty engagement in the college's long-term strategic planning process. Senior administrators at this college had long been committed to using data to inform strategic planning efforts, yet faculty and staff had generally been excluded from these efforts. Achieving the Dream was seen by the president as an opportunity to engage a wider group of stakeholders in the planning process and expand the use of data across the college.

Achieving the Dream was viewed by many college leaders as helping their colleges prepare for and respond to a changing student body. College personnel in both states described a noticeable shift in the student demographics and in the readiness of their students for college-level work. A PA college president said:

> We are seeing a greater influx of minority students. We found fewer minority students are [graduating]. We're wrestling with how to attack the issue and issues of retention. Achieving the Dream fits with the issues that are arising.

In WA, a college with an increasing percentage of low-income and English as a Second Language (ESL) students was struggling to move students from ESL and adult basic education (ABE) into college-credit courses. The college was clearly dedicated to better understanding and serving these students, and the president and senior administrator viewed Achieving the Dream as a guide to improvement. The interim vice president of instruction described the importance of transitioning ABE and ESL students into career and technical education (CTE) programs at the college:

> The demographics of the area have continued to change. Our assumption is that ABE/ESL will grow by a least 10 percent every year into the foreseeable future. Transfer enrollments and CTE enrollments are flat.… If the technical faculty want to think about their market, they need to think about this population. There is a realization that we are different than we used to be, and people are thinking about what this means for the programs on campus. These students [ABE/ESL] become a pool of potential students for their programs. It is beginning to be viewed as central to the college.

Synergy with accreditation standards

Presidents and senior administrators interviewed at 10 of the 13 colleges thought that Achieving the Dream would help prepare their institutions to comply with regional accreditation standards. In both states, the initiative's emphasis on using data to revise college practices and policies to improve student outcomes was reinforced by accreditation standards. The PA and WA colleges were in various stages of the reaccreditation process; some colleges had recently completed their reaccreditation efforts, while others were preparing for an upcoming accreditation visit.

Colleges that had already had a recent accreditation team visit indicated that the experience had helped prepare their institutions for data-driven decision making. A WA college president said that all of the WA colleges were "getting scalded by accreditation," and viewed Achieving the Dream as helping colleges comply with accreditation standards. Another WA college that had recently gone through the reaccreditation process received a recommendation regarding insufficient academic advising. As part of its Achieving the Dream efforts, the college used data on its students to improve the advising process. The college redesigned a student success course, and preliminary evaluation data suggested the new course had already led to improved student retention. Senior administrators said the accreditation finding provided additional impetus to focus initiative efforts in that area. Similarly, a PA college received a recommendation from its accrediting agency in 2005 for inadequate student outcomes assessment. Prior to joining Achieving the Dream, its institutional research (IR) department had begun working with faculty across the academic departments to strengthen learning assessment.

The college's participation in Achieving the Dream was viewed by both administrators and faculty as furthering those efforts.

Administrators at several colleges with an upcoming reaccreditation visit said Achieving the Dream, with its emphasis on building a culture of evidence, would help them prepare for the visit. College leadership suggested that the regional accrediting bodies for both PA (Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools) and WA (The Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities) are increasingly demanding evidence of measurable student outcomes. In PA, one college already decided that Achieving the Dream would provide the framework for the college's reaccreditation efforts. In WA, several college personnel suggested that the Achieving Dream model of institutional improvement involved a more rigorous analysis of student outcomes data than was required by accreditation; an administrator with many years of experience with accreditation said that the Northwest Commission had weaker institutional effectiveness standards than other regional accrediting bodies. However, according to two WA college presidents, the Northwest Commission is in the process of revising its accreditation standards, and the new standards are expected to have a greater focus on the use of data to measure and improve student outcomes. The president of one WA college said Achieving the Dream would help the college in future accreditation visits:

> Everything we're doing with Achieving the Dream is a great asset for accreditation. The Northwest accreditation is going under major transformation — details of how it ends up are unclear — but Achieving the Dream will have a real positive impact.

Alignment with state higher education goals

State policy also positively influenced leadership commitment and support for Achieving the Dream. This was particularly the case in WA, where new policy initiatives from the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges (SBCTC) are spurring colleges to focus on improving student outcomes using performance data. Most notably, the Student Achievement Initiative provides financial rewards to colleges for increasing the rate at which their students attained key "achievement points" in four categories: (1) making gains in adult basic skills and pre-college remedial courses; (2) completing a college-level math course; (3) earning college credits; and (4) completing a certificate, degree, or apprenticeship training. Both Achieving the Dream and the Student Achievement Initiative encouraged colleges to look at barriers to student progress and then to develop strategies to overcome them. The president of one WA college argued that Achieving the Dream, with its focus on the creation of a campus-wide culture of evidence, would help students progress in their educational programs — a primary goal of the Student Achievement Initiative. At another WA college, the director of

institutional research described how Achieving the Dream and the Student Achievement Initiative were both pushing the college toward more systematic data analysis:

> Achieving the Dream's timing is perfect because we have in WA the Student Achievement Initiative … which is fascinating and has all sorts of IR components … thinking of IR as a strategic resource and something you would do deeply in a very purposeful and analytical way, rather than just as a reporting and record-keeping function.

Furthermore, senior administrators at the college began to focus their Achieving the Dream efforts on improving student performance in developmental math, one of the "achievement points" in the Student Achievement Initiative.

While most WA college presidents commented on the synergy between Achieving the Dream and the Student Achievement Initiative, it is important to note that not all presidents were supportive of the new state initiative. One president had a favorable view of Achieving the Dream, saying the initiative allowed colleges to focus on their own particular student needs and problem areas. However, the president argued that Achieving the Dream strategies, designed to address students needs, could potentially harm a college's ability to accrue achievement points under the Student Achievement Initiative. For example, the president highlighted the points received for students who complete a certificate or degree, and suggested that it sometimes makes more sense for students to transfer prior to receiving an associate degree: "Good advising is not always telling students to complete the degree."

In PA, the research team saw less evidence of any influence or overlap between state policy and Achieving the Dream. In contrast with WA, PA did not have a state-level governing or coordinating board to provide oversight and direction to the state's community colleges. One dean of students in PA did suggest that his college was able to use data required for state reporting in its Achieving the Dream efforts. The college, which had been required by the state for more than 30 years to collect student attendance records, began using the state-mandated attendance database as part of an early-alert strategy to identify and reach out to students who were struggling with poor attendance and course performance. According to the dean, the early-alert strategy was an example of the college's creativity in learning how to use state-required compliance data to improve student success.

Communication about Achieving the Dream to Internal College Stakeholders

Achieving the Dream expects college leaders to communicate the Achieving the Dream vision widely within the college. The PA and WA presidents and senior administrators used a variety of communication channels to inform the college community about initiative goals and

values, including college-wide forums such as fall convocations, faculty in-services and other professional development days, email alerts, data briefs, and featured presentations by Achieving the Dream coaches and data facilitators.

These communication efforts were fairly successful in raising awareness and understanding of the initiative among college personnel. In over half of the colleges in both PA and WA, faculty and staff interviewed by the research team suggested that a substantial number of their colleagues understood both the goals and details of the initiative.

Organization and Management of the Initiative

Achieving the Dream expects college leaders to organize teams of college personnel to oversee the initiative's process of institutional improvement. During the planning year, colleges were to form separate core and data teams to guide their work on the initiative. The core team's function was to lead the policy and institutional change work, while the data team was expected to collect and analyze student outcomes data to support the work of the core team.

Core and data team structure

All of the colleges began their Achieving the Dream work with a core team, which generally involved a broad cross-section of college personnel, including faculty leaders, mid-level administrators, and counselors. Almost all of the college presidents put senior administrators in charge of leading or co-leading core team activities.

All but two colleges also began the planning year with separate data teams, and, with one exception, they included non-IR personnel. One of them, which did not have a separate data team, chose to start its planning year with a combined core and data team called the Achieving the Dream steering committee. The steering committee reviewed data, discussed possible pilot programs, and proposed implementation strategies. At the end of planning year, the steering committee created a separate data taskforce which continued to meet regularly. The other college chose to establish not just one data team, but a team for each of the five main Achieving the Dream performance indicators. Furthermore, during the implementation year, each of the college's pilot strategies had a designated data person who worked with the office of institutional effectiveness.

While the core teams were still functioning during the implementation year, 7 of the 13 colleges did not have functioning data teams at the time of the research team visit. At 2 of these colleges, the data teams were on hiatus until results from strategy pilots were ready to be analyzed, or until vacancies in initiative leadership were filled. Another 2 colleges in WA disbanded their data teams and incorporated the data team responsibilities into the work of their IR offices. Because of significant leadership transitions during the course of the planning year,

one PA college made the decision to merge the core and data teams. Many faculty who were originally involved drifted away and the remaining team was not terribly active while they waited for a new president to be appointed.

Two colleges created a new permanent structure that absorbed the responsibilities of the data team. One of the colleges created an office of institutional effectiveness (IE). At the other, the data team, which included faculty, administrators, and IR staff, became a permanent structure known as the Institutional Assessment Council. The president described how integrating both the core and data teams into the college's permanent operations served as a signal to college personnel that the initiative was not a temporary, grant-funded project:

> We're looking at Achieving the Dream as a vehicle to accomplish what we're already trying to do. We're using our planning council as the core team — to negate the perception that this is an add-on. They're looking at the data, persistence, what's going on in programs. There's a logical fit.... We're going to create an assessment council that's part of the governance structure of the college. The data team was moved into this. These will just become embedded in the culture. We're already starting to get there.

One WA college was considering making its data team a permanent committee. According to the director of institutional research, the president viewed the data team as critical to facilitating data-driven decision making across the institution: "The data taskforce is the first step in [institutionalizing a culture of evidence]. The president has asked for the data taskforce to become permanent."

Core and data team leadership

The research team found that stable leadership of the Achieving the Dream teams by respected senior administrators helped move the initiative forward. By placing senior administrators in charge of the core team, the presidents signaled to faculty and staff that the initiative was a college priority. For example, one president gave a senior administrator at the college the task of co-chairing the core team and of helping lead the initiative. This senior administrator was well respected at the college and seen as effective in building consensus for change and then implementing good ideas. Both the senior administrator and the other co-chair of the core team (the dean of student affairs) established an open and transparent process that encouraged faculty, staff, and students to become involved.

At a few colleges there was turnover among senior administrators who led the core team. At one of them, despite the strong commitment of the president to Achieving the Dream, progress on the initiative essentially came to a standstill because of turnover among senior administrators responsible for its day-to-day leadership. A staff member explained, "There was

a major stumble with all the staff changes. The person who was in charge [of directing the initiative] retired…. There was a loss of momentum and people got dispirited."

Engagement of faculty in core team activities

Engaging faculty and faculty union leaders in core team activities helped build college-wide support for the initiative. The president of the faculty union at one WA college was a co-leader of the core team. The involvement of a faculty leader with wide informal networks of support throughout the college helped shape campus-wide opinion of the initiative. The college also rotated the membership of the core team to facilitate understanding of the initiative and participation among a broad segment of the college. Both of these tactics were successful in raising awareness and faculty buy-in to the initiative.

Step 2: Use Data to Identify and Prioritize Problems

Achieving the Dream's second step in building a culture of evidence calls for colleges to diagnose problems in student achievement and identify priority areas for student success interventions. The colleges were expected to use longitudinal student cohort data and other evidence to identify gaps in achievement among different student groups as well as "leakage points" where students struggled or dropped out. A key assumption of this approach is that once faculty and staff see that certain groups of students are not doing as well as others, they will be motivated to address barriers to student success.

Process for Identifying Student Achievement Gaps

Colleges in both PA and WA closely followed the Achieving the Dream process of identifying student achievement gaps and other problem areas. All 13 colleges relied on an analysis of their own college's data as the primary means of identifying gaps in student achievement. Twelve of them used longitudinal cohort analysis to identify problems, and all the colleges disaggregated their data analyses by student race and ethnicity to identify achievement gaps. Most of the PA colleges and all of the WA colleges also used the Achieving the Dream database[12] to help with problem identification.

The colleges collected qualitative data to identify problem areas through both student and faculty focus groups and student surveys. All but one college used student focus groups or student surveys to identify problems in student achievement. The Community College Survey

[12]JBL Associates, a higher education consulting firm, is compiling the Achieving the Dream database with data provided periodically from all the participating colleges for the purpose of measuring progress.

of Student Engagement (CCSSE)[13] was a particularly popular tool used by the colleges to measure student engagement. All of the PA colleges and three of the WA colleges used CCSSE results to identify problems in student achievement. One WA college was waiting for its base-year CCSSE results at the time of the research team visit. So, while the college had not yet used the results to identify problem areas, it was planning to incorporate CCSSE into its future planning efforts.

The Achieving the Dream process of identifying problem areas encouraged many colleges to begin to shift their approach toward measuring student outcomes. Like many community and technical colleges across the country, the majority of the WA and PA Achieving the Dream colleges had little experience in using data on students to drive decision making. Three colleges did not have an institutional research department prior to their involvement with Achieving the Dream; institutional research at these colleges primarily consisted of compliance reporting for state and federal agencies and for accreditation purposes.

Even among the colleges that did have IR offices, the majority did not use data to systematically evaluate student success efforts prior to joining Achieving the Dream. For a PA college, joining the initiative led to the adoption of a systematic approach to monitoring student outcomes for the first time. The college had experienced significant student enrollment growth in recent years and measuring student outcomes was at best a secondary focus at the institution. As part of the process of identifying problem areas, the college embarked upon extensive student cohort tracking, disaggregating student outcomes by race and ethnicity. The college focused on tracking student progression from developmental education to college-level courses. It analyzed CCSSE data and conducted focus groups with both student and faculty to better understand the challenges that students were facing in their developmental education courses, and with developmental math in particular. This data analysis led to important findings and recommendations for change.

Colleges more experienced in sophisticated data analysis also benefited from the initiative's emphasis on disaggregated student outcomes data. For example, one college had long used data to make decisions, but in a limited fashion. The college had not previously disaggregated and analyzed its data until joining Achieving the Dream. The process became much more systematic after joining, and there was an expectation that decision makers at the college would use data to inform decisions that impact student success. According to its IR director:

[13]The Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE) is a national survey administered to community college students that assesses institutional practices and student behaviors that are correlated with student learning and retention. CCSSE was established in 2001 as a project of the Community College Leadership Program at the University of Texas at Austin.

> There was no systematic plan for identifying achievement gaps. As problems or specific issues emerged, like students on probation, research would head in that direction, but it wasn't a systematic review process. The implementation of our data team really got our analytical resources together to look at our data, disaggregate it, and to look at our achievement gaps and to decide on what interventions we wanted to adopt. The Achieving the Dream structure focused us on the gaps we want to address.

Institutional Research Capacity

College leadership signaled its commitment to more systematic data analysis by hiring additional personnel to improve IR capacity. Just over half of the colleges hired new personnel to staff the institutional research offices. Two of the three colleges that did not have an IR department prior to joining the initiative established and staffed institutional research (or institutional effectiveness) offices. An additional four colleges — one in PA and three in WA — added institutional researchers to their existing IR or IE department.

Despite the success that the initiative seemed to have had in moving colleges toward more systematic data analysis, IR capacity remained a clear obstacle for many colleges as they tried to accurately identify and diagnose problem areas. The IR staff members at the two colleges that established an IR function because of Achieving the Dream had a steep learning curve as they sought to develop their data analysis capabilities. For example, one of the colleges had come a long way in developing institutional research capacity, and faculty and staff welcomed the new IR office with numerous data requests. A research analyst at the college said that the "need to measure and have [data] input infiltrates everything." Yet, the new director responsible for data analysis came out of a grant writing and compliance background and lacked formal training in data and statistical analysis. The college will likely struggle as it continues to develop and implement a coherent and focused research plan. The research analyst described the challenge by saying: "I feel overwhelmed with the work demands, but we're moving at a fast pace and it's exciting. We're building the car and driving it at the same time." Even colleges with established IR or IE functions were challenged. The director of a three-person institutional research office described in blunt terms multiple challenges:

> I would say that right now our IR function has a horrible internal reputation as far as people even asking them for anything. Part of it is the labor it takes to get the information out. Part of it is the lack of enough people working in that area and a lot of it is also the organization issues and the prioritization issues and communication issues we have that are significant.

In WA, the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges (SBCTC) has a national reputation for having a sophisticated state-level data system coupled with outstanding policy research capacity. In fact, it used that data capacity, which can track individual student progress through the system, to design and implement the Student Achievement Initiative. Yet, the WA Achieving the Dream colleges as a group did not have stronger IR or IT capacity than the PA colleges. Despite the Washington's reputation for sophisticated data systems, the individual colleges tended to find the legacy data system shared by the community and technical colleges in the state very difficult to access and use. It took a highly experienced data manager to be able to manipulate the system in order to conduct analyses beyond those provided by the state.

Impact of Personnel Turnover

Personnel turnover among staff responsible for institutional research delayed the data collection and work of the data teams at four of the colleges. At one institution, the college's institutional researcher left after doing some initial analyses tracking the progress of students over time. According to one faculty member, "People were really excited that we were going to do something for that cohort. Then we lost our institutional researcher, her assistant, and then the VP. Some of the committee members turned over." Longitudinal cohort tracking was aborted shortly thereafter during the planning year.

At three of these four colleges, however, the resignation of IR personnel proved to be only a slight setback; the colleges' IR departments emerged stronger than before with new staff. The fourth had difficulty hiring IR staff due to its location in an economically depressed area, and was still trying to hire at the time of the research team's visit in spring 2008.

Presentation of Data Analysis to Faculty and Staff

All 13 colleges presented the results of their analysis of achievement gaps to faculty and staff across their institutions, though the sharing of student outcomes data with faculty was not without risks. Achieving the Dream's model of institutional change, which calls for the use of data to identify and prioritize problem areas, can threaten longstanding ways of conducting business, and brings college personnel face-to-face with potentially unflattering data on student performance. A WA president explained the challenge of presenting faculty and staff with evidence of low success rates among their students: "If you have worked for years and feel confident and then you are told you aren't being successful, it's not easy to take." Most colleges did not have much prior experience sharing student outcomes data with faculty and student services staff, particularly data on students across the college rather than in specific programs. A faculty member at one college said that, in the past, data analysis was done primarily by individual departments: "We were a bunch of little chimneys. We only looked at our own data

when we did our program reviews. I like being able to look across and see what others are doing."

Colleges used various means to communicate the results to faculty and staff, including during president's day and other college-wide events, through research briefs, and in campus publications. At about half of the WA colleges and almost all of the PA colleges the realities of poor student outcomes came as a surprise. The president of a PA college said: "When we started reporting how many students we were losing and graduation rates, faculty were in denial that it was happening in their own programs." The longitudinal data analysis at one of the WA colleges revealed that, while the student pass rate was high in the first college-level English course, students were not progressing to the next English course. According to one faculty member:

> English was stunned by the falloff between English 101 and 102. People were hitting the wall. We're a very diverse school. I was stunned at the high attrition rate of our African-American students, which is a large part of our student body…. We had a sense that some of these students were weak going into the next course. But it blew us away that so many would not be completing the follow-up course.

The presentation of low student outcomes data was generally met with genuine interest and reflection by faculty and staff. At only a few institutions did some college personnel try to explain away the poor outcomes by saying that the students were responsible for their own lack of success or suggesting that other departments or divisions at their colleges were at fault and needed to improve. Instead, at most of the colleges, the faculty and staff interviewed by the research team seemed to believe that improving the success of their students was within their control. Furthermore, at every college, faculty and staff indicated that the identified achievement gaps and problems areas in student outcomes provided motivation to improve and prioritize student success strategies. For example, at one college where longitudinal data analysis was done for the first time during the Achieving the Dream planning year, significant student achievement gaps came as a surprise. The data prodded the college to discuss the barriers to success among African-American students and other student subgroups, an issue that is often ignored.

Step 3: Engage Stakeholders in Developing Strategies for Addressing Priority Problems

The third step in the Achieving the Dream institutional improvement process is engaging internal and external stakeholders in the development of new student success strategies. Achieving the Dream encouraged the colleges to involve as many voices as possible

in the process, including those of faculty, student services staff, community representatives, and students. This is a tall order for colleges that are already stretched thin serving disadvantaged students. Yet the buy-in of faculty and staff on the front lines of working with students is critical for effective and long-lasting student success interventions. A WA president explained the importance:

> Anytime you ask people to do things differently and develop a different attitude toward students, if you want to be successful, you have to have people involved on front lines working with students really buy into it. Any top-down effort is doomed to failure, so you have to find ways to work with people using the data-driven approach to work collectively to come up with these strategies.

Receptiveness to the Initiative by Faculty

Faculty generally had a favorable view of Achieving the Dream goals and principles. The initiative, by tracking student progression within and across courses and programs, was seen by many instructors and counselors as a particularly effective means of helping them identify areas to improve. Faculty and staff at some of the colleges suggested that Achieving the Dream, as a high-profile national initiative, spurred their presidents and senior administrators to support their efforts to get more information on their students. For example, a math faculty member at a WA college said that his department had been working for several years to use course-level data on student outcomes to improve the math curriculum and refine teaching methods. According to this instructor, "[Achieving the Dream has] given us legitimacy with the president because if we said it's an Achieving the Dream initiative, it made it a priority."

Some college personnel interviewed by the research team were concerned that Achieving the Dream would be just another administrative program *du jour*. A vice president of a PA college described the reaction to Achieving the Dream from many among his college's faculty and staff as: "Here comes another program." He further said that they were reluctant to commit to the initiative "because no one ever looked at what we did with our existing programs."

The president of one PA college suggested that younger faculty members would be more willing to embrace new learning and teaching strategies than older, more entrenched instructors:

> When you ask faculty to alter their classroom practices, the way they work with their students, that's a challenge. Fortunately, 50 percent of the faculty has been hired within the last five years, so they are not as firmly entrenched. They seem open to look at things differently.

In some cases, receptiveness to the initiative was affected by the relationship between the administration and faculty. At one institution with an institutional culture that promoted healthy collaboration between administrators and faculty and student services staff, the initiative was well received. The core team leader, a senior administrator, successfully framed the initiative as integral to daily activities of faculty and staff. He described his approach to informing the college's faculty about the initiative:

> One selling piece I did in the beginning is that Achieving the Dream is not one more thing on your plate. It is really a way to frame things we are already doing, and create evidence-based decision making. There was a lot of buy-in. I must have said it ten times in different meetings. The faculty here have bought into the idea of a larger faculty responsibility.

At a few schools, conflict between the administration and faculty negatively affected the faculty's receptiveness to Achieving the Dream. Several faculty involved with the initiative at one college perceived it as a top-down administrative project, even through there was fairly broad faculty representation on the initiative's core team. The faculty and staff's reaction was clearly part of general dissatisfaction with faculty-administration communication at the institution. At another college, there was a clear divide between the administration and faculty that hindered collaboration, with any initiative being driven from college leadership viewed with considerable suspicion by faculty.

Faculty and Staff Concerns with Achieving the Dream

At a handful of colleges faculty and/or staff expressed concerns about the potential negative consequences of their institution's involvement in Achieving the Dream.

Time commitment

At almost half of the colleges, some faculty were concerned about the time requirements for the initiative. At colleges where faculty were stretched thin by the demands from students and administrators, the perception that Achieving the Dream was an additional work burden created resistance to participation. Veteran faculty members at one college reported seeing many student success programs come and go over the years, and they were reluctant to invest time in an initiative that may also be short lived. An instructor at this college said:

> Faculty are concerned about investing in initiatives. In the past when we have done so much with learning communities [and] active learning, then nothing changes. Faculty are afraid that we will invest all this energy that we don't really have in Achieving the Dream. And then next year we won't have the resources to follow through.

A faculty colleague at the same college said: "I'm passionate about [Achieving the Dream]. But it is a challenge trying to fit this into an overload situation." Some saw the initiative as an add-on to their current job responsibilities, clearly secondary to their mission of teaching and serving students. For example, in WA, a faculty member said: "I think it is a reality that should be acknowledged that it [Achieving the Dream] takes time and it isn't our primary function."

Lowering of standards

At several colleges, some faculty expressed concern that improving student success would mean lowering standards. For example, at one PA college there appeared to be a rear guard of faculty who took issue with the Achieving the Dream premise regarding the potential of colleges to improve student success. In their view, the lack of student success represented inadequate high school preparation, and Achieving the Dream's focus on student persistence threatened to "dumb-down" the academic programs. Similarly, an instructor at a college in WA voiced the concern heard among his colleagues that "if students don't get it, the college shouldn't dummy down our program to make completion statistics."

Preferential treatment for certain students

Some faculty and staff at a few of the colleges expressed concern that the initiative encouraged preferential treatment for certain groups of students. A WA college faculty member said: "Faculty are uncomfortable with specific programs for certain groups of people. One strategy for all is preferable. We need to have uncomfortable conversations about that." At a second WA college, part of the focus of the initiative was on improving the success of Latino students, and some faculty and staff raised concerns that it wasn't inclusive of all of the college's student body. An English faculty member who wasn't involved in designing the college's strategy focused on Latino students said:

> We have a highly resistant faculty. Some are curmudgeons, people who resist anything — a basic resistance to political correctness.... Political correctness is a conversation stopper…. Faculty see Achieving the Dream as looking at some obstacles for some students. We need to [address] obstacles that are affecting all students.

Process for Designing Strategies to Address Achievement Gaps

Colleges largely followed the Achieving the Dream planning process in the design of new strategies. At a few colleges, personnel were anxious to implement student success interventions soon after their college joined Achieving the Dream. A developmental reading faculty member at one of them who also sat on the core team described how she had to remind her colleagues of the necessity of sound data analysis before crafting student success interventions:

> In the beginning faculty didn't understand how this would progress — [They] wanted to get to implementation much more quickly. [I] needed to explain that this was data driven and we needed time to do the data analysis.

Most colleges did not develop improvement strategies until after analyzing their data. Only three had clearly identified the strategies they wanted to implement prior to an analysis of the problem areas. Three PA colleges and five WA colleges relied on their own data on student outcomes as the primary means of formulating their initiative strategies. Colleges also tapped national research on effective student success interventions to inform their strategy developments. Colleges in both PA and WA benefited from the experiences of colleges that had joined the initiative in previous years. Teams from all 13 colleges participated in the Achieving the Dream Strategy Institute, which was also well attended by teams from previous rounds. Several colleges took note of mistakes and successes of these earlier round colleges, and many of the strategies adopted in WA and PA were informed by presentations at the Strategy Institute. In addition, college personnel at several institutions reported using the Achieving the Dream website as an additional resource to support strategy development.

Involvement of Faculty and Staff in the Planning Process

Full-time personnel

Seven of the 13 colleges engaged faculty and staff on a wide scale in the process of using data to develop student success strategies. At one college with a tradition of being data driven, pronounced institutional silos had previously limited collaboration on strategies to improve student success. While the college clearly had more work to do in breaking down those silos, more faculty and staff became involved in examining student success data and seeing the differences in student performance by subgroup. The college created five cross-cutting work groups during the planning year, each focused on one of the initiative's performance indicators. These teams analyzed data provided by the institutional research staff and then recommended strategies to an initiative planning team. Participation in these five work groups included over 90 faculty and staff members from across the college, and the process encouraged widespread faculty involvement in issues regarding student success. The initiative at this college also

increased the visibility and stature of the IE team and the student affairs staff. As a whole, the college became more focused on student success and on thinking of new strategies to help all students be successful. The provost said: "I think there's a creative energy that is different around possible solutions."

Another college made significant progress in engaging faculty in the planning of a developmental education strategy for the initiative. The college brought a group of faculty together to work on the cut scores of the college's developmental education placement exam, the ACCUPLACER. The developmental education faculty reported that this was the first time that they had been asked to provide input about the placement exam. The faculty had not previously analyzed the placement scores of incoming students, nor the placement levels or student grades in developmental courses. The process helped both developmental and college-level faculty understand the purpose of the placement exam. The faculty group determined that the existing course structure was not effective and began to reorganize the math sequence, and they were planning an evaluation of student outcomes under the new structure.

A third college had a combined core and data team, called the Achieving the Dream steering committee, during the planning year. During the implementation year, an additional developmental education taskforce was created with faculty and administrators from this steering committee. The new group had visibility across the college and appeared to have enthusiastic members who showed real interest in making developmental education more successful. This developmental education taskforce, which included representatives from both faculty and student support staff, created an avenue for continued, broad, and engaged discussion about issues relating to student success.

Yet, at about half of the colleges in both PA and WA, interviewees indicated that a relatively small number of faculty and staff were actively involved in analyzing the data on student success and identifying strategies for improvement. Administrators, faculty, and staff at several colleges described the amount of time and effort required by the initiative, and suggested that limited broad-based participation. Only two colleges gave faculty release time from instruction to facilitate their participation in initiative planning. One of them provided release time to three faculty members to participate on the core team. The college realized early on that participation in the core team would require a substantial set of responsibilities and it wanted full participation from faculty representatives (one of whom also served as president of the faculty association). At the other college, faculty were fully engaged from the start of the initiative to design how the college would respond to the gaps in student achievement. As the instructional vice president put it: "If faculty need to be involved at the end, they need to be involved in the beginning to help shape the solutions."

Adjunct instructors

Most colleges struggled with how to engage adjunct instructors in initiative planning. Indeed, only two colleges actively sought to engage adjuncts in the planning process. As with other initiatives, scheduling and college expectations regarding adjunct participation on campus committees or at meetings were barriers to their involvement with the initiative.

Board, Student, and Community Engagement

College presidents kept their boards of trustees regularly informed of initiative activities and a few colleges included board members on their core teams. However, most board members were not routinely engaged in the initiative. Ultimately, it is the responsibility of trustees to hold college leadership teams accountable for improved student outcomes and to require that college programs and processes contribute to meeting public needs. Thus, if the goal of Achieving the Dream is to bring about sustainable institutional transformation, closing achievement gaps, and improving student success for at-risk populations, trustees need to be better engaged at the initiative policy level.

Similarly, while student focus groups contributed insights into problem areas at most colleges, no college chose to engage students directly in designing strategies. The lack of student involvement in designing strategies was not too surprising, as the vast majority of community and technical college students commute to campus, and they face significant challenges balancing school, work, and family responsibilities.

Community members or groups were rarely informed about the initiative or engaged in its activities, other than occasional presentations by a college leader in the community. Only a handful of colleges reported to outside stakeholders about their Achieving the Dream findings. In PA, one college shared its student outcomes data with local high school principals and superintendents, and another brought in community members to participate with faculty and staff in developing a strategic plan. In WA, one college presented its disaggregated student outcomes data and discussed the achievement gaps among student subgroups with community leaders.

Most colleges did not disseminate the results of internal data analysis to external constituencies. A possible explanation for this hesitancy came from a senior administrator who was involved in discussing some of her college's disaggregated student outcomes data:

> The president wants anything we do in the external community to make the college look good, not to let the community know all of these things we found out with our data about how badly we are doing, what our gaps are with race/ethnicity.

Comparison of PA and WA Colleges with Round 1 Achieving the Dream Colleges

This section compares the progress of the PA and WA colleges in implementing the first three steps of the Achieving the Dream improvement process with that of the Round 1 colleges at the same point (a year-and-a-half) in the process.

Leadership commitment

College leaders at both the Round 1 Achieving the Dream colleges and the PA and WA colleges expressed a commitment to Achieving the Dream goals and values and viewed the initiative as consistent with college goals and priorities. College presidents and senior administrators at the PA and WA colleges were more likely than their peers at Round 1 institutions to view Achieving the Dream as helping their college comply with regional accreditation standards. WA colleges were more likely to view Achieving the Dream as aligned with state policy than either the Round 1 or the PA colleges.

College leaders demonstrated their commitment by reallocating resources in support of initiative efforts — most notably WA and PA presidents who used initiative and college funds to build IR capacity — and designated senior administrators to lead the initiative. To an even greater extent than did the Round 1 college leaders, the PA and WA presidents delegated oversight of the initiative to respected senior administrators rather than to project managers or other administrators outside of college leadership.

The effects of leadership turnover on the commitment to the initiative were less of a concern among the PA and WA colleges than among the Round 1 colleges. Only 3 of the 13 PA and WA colleges had recently experienced a turnover in college leadership compared with 9 of the 27 Round 1 colleges. Furthermore, in each of the three PA and WA colleges that experienced turnover, the new president expressed full support for the initiative. As with the Round 1 colleges, the research team found that stable leadership of initiative teams by senior administrators helped with initiative planning and implementation.

Faculty and staff receptiveness to the initiative

Faculty and staff at both the Round 1 colleges and the PA and WA colleges were mostly supportive of Achieving the Dream goals and principles. Yet, college personnel at a handful of the PA and WA colleges and the Round 1 cohort of schools suggested that some of their colleagues were concerned that the initiative encourages strategies targeted toward certain groups of students.

As with the Round 1 colleges, the PA and WA colleges presented the results of their data analysis to faculty and student services staff. The data came as a surprise to many college

personnel in both the Round 1 and the PA and WA colleges. Faculty and staff at the PA and WA colleges appeared more likely than those in the first-round colleges to view the data showing poor student performance or achievement gaps as motivation to improve. The PA and WA faculty and staff were less likely than their peers at Round 1 colleges to describe poor student performance as the result inadequate prior student preparation, or to blame their colleagues for the lack of student success. Faculty and staff at half of the Round 1 colleges expressed concern that data on student performance would be used to penalize them. The research team did not hear a similar concern from faculty and staff at the PA and WA colleges, although college personnel at several of the third-round colleges did echo comments heard by the Round 1 research team that a focus on student retention could undermine educational quality.

Process for Identifying Student Achievement Gaps and Designing Strategies

The PA and WA colleges relied to a greater degree than the Round 1 colleges on an analysis of their own college's data in identifying gaps in student achievement. While only about half of the Round 1 colleges used longitudinal cohort tracking as part of their analysis of student performance, all but one of the PA and WA colleges did so at least to some extent. Moreover, to a greater extent than the Round 1 colleges, the PA and WA colleges used their own data to choose improvement strategies, rather than selecting the strategies to implement before the data analysis was completed, as was the case with many of the Round 1 colleges.

About half of the WA and PA colleges successfully engaged faculty on a fairly wide scale in the process of designing strategies, a proportion comparable to that for the Round 1 colleges. Few colleges in the WA, PA, or the Round 1 Achieving the Dream cohort actively engaged adjunct instructors in the planning process. And, as with the Round 1 colleges, the PA and WA colleges had only limited involvement of students and community members in the initiative.

Summary

The research team found widespread support across the 13 PA and WA colleges for the Achieving the Dream goals and principles. The commitment of senior leadership to improving student success, particularly among disadvantaged students, was evident among the colleges in both states. College presidents and senior administrators viewed Achieving the Dream's focus on using data to improve student outcomes as consistent with trends in both accreditation standards and state policy. As a result, almost all of the PA and WA presidents were strong advocates for the initiative on their campuses and were actively engaged in Achieving the Dream efforts. College presidents and senior administrators demonstrated a willingness to re-

allocate college resources to support initiative activities, and many suggested that the initiative will serve as a framework for current and future student success efforts.

Faculty and staff in both states generally had a favorable view of the initiative, yet some were worried about the time commitment, while others feared that the focus on student progression could lead to a lowering of academic standards at their institutions. At a few colleges, some personnel also expressed concern that their college had developed strategies for specific groups of traditionally disadvantaged students, rather than programs that touched all students.

Achieving the Dream calls for colleges to use data on student progression to identify gaps in student achievement. As with the Round 1 colleges, limited IR capacity was an obstacle for many PA and WA colleges as they tried to identify areas of poor student outcomes. Despite this challenge, all 13 colleges used an analysis of their college's data as the primary means of identifying gaps in student achievement. The colleges used both qualitative and quantitative data to identify and prioritize problems areas. Most of the colleges used the Achieving the Dream database to help identify problems areas, and all but one college also used student focus groups or student surveys.

Seven of the 13 colleges engaged faculty and staff on a fairly wide scale in the process of using data to develop improvement strategies. At the other 6, only a relatively small number of faculty and staff were actively involved in analyzing data and identifying strategies for improvement. There is room for improvement in faculty and staff engagement at all of the colleges moving forward. With a few exceptions, the PA and WA colleges used the analysis of college data to guide the development of the strategies, though national research on student success interventions and lessons learned from student success efforts elsewhere were also used to design strategies. While college personnel were generally committed to the initiative, turnover among presidents, senior administrators, and institutional research staff delayed progress on the initiative at a handful of colleges.

Chapter 5

Strategies for Improving Student Success

Introduction

Achieving the Dream encourages colleges to implement systemic interventions that will have a significant impact on student performance, rather than "boutique" programs that will benefit small numbers of students. Thus, after identifying barriers to student success and designing improvement strategies during the planning year, Achieving the Dream colleges are expected to move on to step 4 of the initiative's institutional improvement process: they are to begin implementing their strategies, to evaluate the outcomes of their strategies, and to use the results to make further improvements and scale up those that are successful.

This chapter describes the Achieving the Dream strategies being implemented by the 13 PA and WA colleges. It discusses the progress that colleges were making in the first year of the four-year implementation period and identifies several key factors that influenced the progress of strategy implementation. The chapter also indicates how far along the colleges were in evaluating the outcomes of the strategies, as well as in implementing their plans for scaling up successful interventions. It concludes by comparing both the nature of the strategies implemented by the PA and WA colleges with the Round 1 Achieving the Dream colleges and the progress of the colleges in implementing them at a similar phase of involvement with the initiative.

The description and analysis of the colleges' student success strategies are based on field visits to the PA and WA colleges during spring 2008. Information was also obtained from the colleges' implementation plans, entries made by the colleges in an online Achieving the Dream database in late spring 2008, and reports by data facilitators working with these colleges.

Overview of Colleges' Strategies

Each PA and WA college developed an implementation plan during the 2006-07 planning year which described college strategies for breaking down barriers to student success and indicated which student populations to target and the scale of the intervention. The Achieving the Dream initiative provides colleges with substantial freedom in identifying and designing institutionally relevant student success interventions. Colleges may decide to implement new programmatic strategies such as a learning community or a student success course, or they may expand or improve existing programs. Colleges may also choose to modify college policies, such as restricting late registration or mandating academic advising for developmental education students.

As described in the previous chapter, colleges analyzed student outcomes data and many conducted student and faculty focus groups prior to developing their strategies. However, the strategies were also clearly informed by resources from the Achieving the Dream website and Strategy Institutes, a review of the literature on effective practices, and lessons learned from past and current student success efforts at the colleges. The types of strategies implemented by the PA and WA colleges fall into the following seven broad categories:

- Advising.
- Developmental education.
- Financial support.
- First-year experience.
- High school and community outreach.
- Professional development.
- Supplemental instruction, tutoring, and study groups.

The types of strategies implemented by the colleges and the number of colleges that implemented each strategy are summarized in Table 5.1.

Table 5.1

Strategies Implemented at Round 3 Colleges as of Spring 2008

by Type and Frequency

Category/Strategy	Description	*Number of Colleges
Advising	**Helps to keep students academically on track.**	**10**
Early Alert System	Identifies students at risk based on poor attendance and academic performance, connecting them with services such as counseling, tutoring, financial aid, etc.	2
Placement Testing	Provides advising, particularly to first-time students, with regard to appropriate course selection based on placement testing to determine basic skill levels.	3
Enhanced Student Advising	Provides expanded advising services to at-risk students in an effort to curb attrition rates and promote academic and personal success.	3
Mentoring	Offers faculty and/or staff personal guidance to students, through one-on-one or group efforts, in an effort to help them reach their educational goals.	1
Restricting Late Enrollment	Disallows late registration for all students in order to increase student success.	1
Developmental Education	**Addresses achievement gaps for students in developmental education and increases the number of students moving on to college-level classes.**	**18**
Academic Policy	Modifies existing developmental education policy to increase the number of students who are able to transition from developmental education to for-credit courses.	1
Curriculum Redesign	Improves student learning outcomes by revising or restructuring existing courses and practices.	1
Instructional Software	Offers computer-based developmental education software as a learning tool.	1

Category/Strategy	Description	*Number of Colleges
Developmental Education (continued)		
Instructor/Cohort-Based Learning	Offers support similar to the learning community, with the expectation that students will be tracked and will have the same instructor for at least two or more courses.	1
Learning Communities	Provides support to developmental education students through enrollment in a community of students who take at least one developmental course and another course together as a group.	4
Multiple Developmental Education Placements Support	Focuses on orientation and advising for developmental education students who place three levels below college-level math and at least one level below in reading or writing.	1
Summer Prep Programs	Provides accelerated academic support, often in the form of intensive summer programs, to students who placed in developmental education.	1
Course Expansion /Restructuring in Math	Adds new courses, adds content to existing courses, or modifies course content in order to prepare developmental education students for success at the next level.	7
Transition from Adult Basic Skills to College	Provides bridge programs and other interventions designed to assist students in transitioning from non-credit adult basic education courses to college-level degree and certificate programs.	1
Financial Support Strategies	**Assists struggling students with monetary and indirect supports.**	**1**
Financial Aid	Provides direct or indirect financial support to students in order to encourage persistence and academic success.	1
First-Year Experience	**Helps students begin college with the tools they need to succeed.**	**8**
Student Success Courses	Increases beginning students' knowledge of how to navigate the college in order to become efficient and productive learners.	6
New Student Orientation	Provides individual and group orientation to first-year students.	1

Category/Strategy	Description	*Number of Colleges
First-Year Experience (continued)		
Academic Progress Reports	Offers regular and consistent communication to first-time students about their academic progress in courses.	1
High School and Community Outreach	**Conducts outreach to high school students and community members to address the increasing number of applicants unprepared or under prepared for college-level work.**	**1**
Placement Testing in the High Schools	Provides high school students and their teachers an opportunity for students to be evaluated on college preparedness before graduation.	1
Professional Development	**Provides opportunities for faculty, staff, and administration to attend conferences, trainings, workshops, and lectures focused on ways to improve student success and the learning climate on campus.**	**4**
Professional Development Programs	Provides opportunities for faculty, staff, and administration to increase their personal and/or professional expertise in such a manner that the experience will improve student achievement.	4
Supplemental Instruction/ Tutoring/Study Groups	**Provides access to assistance with instructional content outside of the classroom.**	**8**
Conferencing	Meets in or out of the classroom to provide intensive faculty-student consultations and academic support services.	1
Tutoring Support	Provides intensive reinforcement to individual students or groups in the classroom or outside of it.	2
Supplemental Instruction	Provides additional teaching and/or tutoring as a course to students in or outside of the classroom.	4
Study Groups	Encourages groups of students with similar academic strengths or deficiencies to meet and provide one another with peer support and tutoring.	1

*Some Round 3 colleges have implemented more than one type of strategy per category.

Prevalent Achieving the Dream Strategies Implemented by the Colleges

This section describes in detail the four most prevalent categories of strategies implemented by the PA and WA colleges: (1) developmental education interventions; (2) supplemental instruction, tutoring, and study groups; (3) student advising; and 4) first-year experience strategies.

Developmental Education Strategies

A majority of incoming PA and WA students required remediation in at least one content area, and many students required developmental coursework in multiple areas. College personnel across both states described serious challenges to serving students who arrived on campus unprepared for college-level work. As with their peers nationwide, such students often struggled to complete their colleges' developmental education sequence and transition to and succeed in college-level courses. Because of the low student success rates of underprepared students, developmental education received considerable attention as the Achieving the Dream colleges began developing and implementing initiative strategies. For some PA and WA colleges, developmental education had long been recognized as an area of concern, and faculty and staff already had in mind interventions that they wanted to implement. Yet, for most colleges, the analysis of student outcomes data during the planning year, combined with student and faculty focus groups, helped guide college personnel to particular interventions. Administrators, faculty, and staff at the PA and WA colleges identified several problem areas within developmental education, including the following:

- Inaccurate placement,
- Students who placed into developmental education but delayed taking developmental courses until the end of their academic careers, if at all,
- Inadequate academic and counseling support, and
- Poor student performance and high dropout rates.

Twelve of the 13 colleges implemented at least one strategy that targeted students in developmental education courses. Presented in Table 5.1, they involved the modification of academic policies, including the way that students were placed into developmental education; cohort-based learning and learning communities; curriculum restructuring; and course revision and expansion, particularly in developmental math.

A few colleges revised the processes by which new students were placed into developmental coursework. In PA, faculty at one college suggested that the college had

historically done little to understand problem areas in developmental education. Upon joining the initiative, a group of faculty began analyzing the college's ACCUPLACER cut scores, the sequence of developmental education courses, and student outcomes. The college realized that students placing into developmental courses were not taking the courses until the end of their academic programs, if at all. As a result of this analysis, the college began requiring students to take the developmental education sequence when they first enrolled at the college. The college also set new cut scores and reorganized both course content and the sequence of math courses. It was planning to evaluate these efforts to determine if they resulted in improved student outcomes.

Student success in developmental math was a particular concern for several PA and WA colleges; 11 of the 13 colleges pursued strategies that targeted students who placed into developmental math. At one PA college, where approximately 90 percent of incoming students placed into developmental math, the data collection and analysis process during the planning year led to a focus on those students. According to an IR staff member at the college "Everywhere we looked pointed to developmental math." The college created a developmental education taskforce that used cohort tracking of developmental math students and focus groups with both students and math faculty to identify specific problem areas with developmental math. As a result of this process, the college began testing a different developmental education placement exam, the ACCUPLACER. The college was also considering adding supplemental instruction to the existing developmental math courses. The taskforce generated considerable enthusiasm among a core group of faculty and staff and was motivating them to stay involved in implementing and revising improvement strategies for developmental education students.

Seven of the Round 1 Achieving the Dream colleges worked with local high schools to increase college readiness as part of their initiative strategies. Among the PA and WA colleges, however, only one college adopted this strategy (although others were doing so apart from Achieving the Dream). That college had made developmental math the number one priority of its Achieving the Dream efforts, had begun working with local high school faculty to improve the math readiness of high school graduates, and planned to offer math placement tests for high school students. In addition to outreach to area high schools, the college began implementing supplemental instruction in math courses; developed and offered an intensive summer math course, and implemented online math tutoring. At the time of the research team's spring 2008 visit, the college was looking to hire a faculty member dedicated solely to teaching developmental math.

Profile of a Developmental Education Strategy: Multiple Developmental Education Placements Support

One WA college sought to increase student retention through a one-on-one advising-centered strategy for underprepared students. The college mined its student outcomes data to identify a group of students who were most at risk: those who placed three levels below readiness for college-level math and at least one level below in either reading and/or writing. Termed the MP3-11 initiative (reflecting the students' relative placement scores), strategies entailed development of a learning community that included intensive one-on-one mentoring/advising, as well as support for college writing and math with the goal of increasing retention rates by 10 percent. Partially implemented, the MP3-11 initiative may be one of the most ambitious and challenging strategies implemented as part of Round 3 of Achieving the Dream, primarily because of its highly at-risk target population. The college was paying adjuncts to participate in the extensive student support systems required as part of the strategy. As a new phase of the intervention, writing faculty were embedding mentoring/advising in a pre-college writing course that would be linked to developmental math as part of the learning community. The strategy required that writing, math, and reading faculty collaborate in the identification of potential students for MP3-11 and in the future planning and scaling up of appropriate and successful interventions. Participating adjunct faculty were paid to participate in the meeting, planning, and mentoring activities supporting the strategy.

Supplemental Instruction, Tutoring, and Study Groups

Eight of the 13 PA and WA colleges developed strategies for providing students with additional learning support resources to help them master course content. Four of them implemented supplemental instruction in which peer leaders were hired by the college to attend classes and schedule review sessions for students. Two colleges were working to expand their tutoring services. One of them was expanding its online tutoring capacity to reach students who lived a considerable distance from the campus and the other was experimenting with "embedded tutoring," in which a peer tutor shadowed struggling students in their courses each day, observing, taking notes, and then helping them during after-class hours.

The supplemental instruction, tutoring, and study group strategies were often targeted to developmental education students or students in gatekeeper courses. Several colleges were considering or beginning to make supplemental instruction and tutoring mandatory in certain developmental math courses, which colleges generally found to be a barrier for many students.

Profile of a Supplemental Instruction Strategy: The Study Club as a Community and Academic Tool

An Intermediate Algebra Study club was created by one WA college to target students who needed additional academic assistance in Intermediate Algebra, a designated "gatekeeper" course at the college. Although other interventions had been tried to increase student persistence in math, particularly for African-American males, administrators learned that students studying Intermediate Algebra frequented the math lab in the greatest numbers and decided to link this desire for academic assistance to peer support and community. Students and faculty posted flyers around the campus and in all three of the tutoring centers announcing the formation of an Intermediate Math study club, with its own math lab faculty facilitator and peer tutors. Math faculty also informed students in each Intermediate Algebra course about the study club. The study club allowed students studying Intermediate Algebra to work with and support one another, while also helping them network and connect with supports. The college's implementation of this strategy was in the early phase, but the college will attempt to compare the success rates of students who attended the Intermediate Algebra Study Club with those of the Intermediate Algebra students who did not attend the club with the hope of increasing the pass rate for Intermediate Algebra by 5 percent over the next two years.

First-Year Experience: Student Success Courses and Academic Progress Reports

A third category of strategies focused on the student experience during the first year of college. Research suggests that positive academic and personal experiences during the first semester and year of college are critical to student persistence and success. Yet, community colleges generally struggle to successfully integrate new students into the college environment. Many incoming community and technical college students have little understanding or mastery of the skills that are needed to succeed in college or of how to navigate the college environment. Often they are "nontraditional" students — first-generation college students, heads of households, full-time workers, or caregivers of parents and children — who struggle to balance life demands with class schedules. The implementation of new student orientations and student success courses were two strategies used by Round 1 colleges to engage these students early in their college careers and improve student outcomes.

Student success courses, geared toward providing first-year students with the knowledge and skills they need to succeed at college, comprised a prevalent strategy among PA

and WA colleges. While only one WA college followed the example of Round 1 colleges and revised student orientation, six of the PA and WA colleges either created or revised the content and delivery of college success courses. The courses included seminars and workshops on a variety of topics, such as time and financial management and foundational skills that directly impact academic success, such as note taking and how to study. Practical, college-specific knowledge on financial aid, how to apply for a scholarship, or where to go in the college with personal concerns was also typically included. For example, a college in WA revised a mandatory student success course for developmental education students and students with an undeclared major. This revised course, designed to help these students acclimate to the college environment and refine their study skills, was widely praised by college personnel. One administrator said: "The [student success course] has been phenomenal. It's a result of Achieving the Dream…. Our mission here is education for the masses. A lot of times those folks don't have a basis for higher education in their families. The [student success course] has filled in that gap."

Similarly, a PA college developed and implemented a college success course composed of three modules that could either be offered separately or combined to create a three-credit-hour course. One module focused on what students need to do to successfully navigate the college. A second module was designed to help students choose the most appropriate academic major. The third focused on steps required to transfer to a four-year college.

Profile of a First-Year Experience Strategy: Academic Progress Reports as a Way to Promote Persistence

One WA college offered academic progress reports to improve persistence. Students received descriptions of expected learning outcomes of the program early in their first semester and regular feedback on course performance. Faculty and staff were in regular conversation with first-time students, documenting their progress while also providing some advising about resources available on the campus or about personal and academic concerns that might prevent a student from completing the course. This early and frequent conversation was contextualized to occur in courses within the following program areas: Auto Body Repair and Refinishing, Culinary Arts, Early Childhood Careers, and Pharmacy Technician. The strategy was piloted in fall 2007 with faculty members and counselors working together to meet the needs of new students in each of the programs. This intervention was in the process of being evaluated, but administrators expected to see a 10 percent decrease in the number of students who withdrew from the programs that received the intervention.

Advising Strategies

Eight of the PA and WA colleges implemented at least one new advising strategy. As was the case with the student success courses, colleges viewed advising as a key activity to help students navigate the college environment and fulfill their personal and academic goals. Some of the strategies pursued by the PA and WA colleges reflected novel approaches to advising. Several colleges were targeting underrepresented students for enhanced or expanded student advising, including first-time college students, Hispanic students, ESL students, and academically underprepared students. For example, a WA college was providing advising to students transitioning from non-credit courses to college-level degree and certificate programs. According to the president, the college's most strategic goal focused on moving ESL students into career technical training and degree programs that would allow them to achieve a certain level of economic security. For these students the college developed "Pathfinder/bridge courses" in health care, business, education, and human services, as well as a generic version for students who were undecided or wanted to transfer. Advising was a key component of interventions that the college hoped would support the successful move of more students into credit-bearing programs.

An early academic intervention proposed at another WA college targeted Opportunity Grant students near the beginning of their first semester. Opportunity Grants were need-based financial aid provided by Washington State to low-income students who were often considered to be at risk due to socioeconomic status and other factors, such as first-time and first-generation student status. Administrators and faculty cited research indicating a high probability that these students would drop out before earning a certificate or degree. The students were encouraged to initiate study groups and to seek tutoring as early in the semester as possible. Faculty members were required to submit quarterly grade checks to determine if extra help was needed.

Several colleges began considering mandatory advising policies, reflecting a larger trend across the WA and PA colleges toward more prescriptive academic and student services policies. For example, one WA college was dramatically changing the scope and target student population of its advising program, and was particularly focused on targeting developmental education students and first-time college students. The college's goal for its advising strategy was to require advising for the following students: (1) full-time and/or degree students, until they accumulated 30 credits; (2) transfer students, until post-transfer for one quarter; and (3) students who changed their major/program, for at least one quarter. Similarly, a college in PA was restricting late registration to prevent students from registering after the first day of class. An administrator from this PA college explained the reason for the new policy: "As a community college we were proud of the fact that we were open-admission and people have the right to fail. Now we're saying that you don't have the right to fail. We will be more prescriptive."

Profile of an Advising Strategy: Mandatory Advisement

At one WA college student focus groups and CCSSE results revealed that students needed additional help in understanding the college and wanted better advising. The college was making advising mandatory for students who test into developmental courses, revising the intake interview process, and creating an assessment and educational planning session. The college made progress in establishing new procedures for advising and provided training and an advising manual to faculty who said they were unprepared to adequately advise students. Some faculty members received advisor training during the faculty in-services in the middle of the first implementation year. Counselors were expected to provide advising training sessions for all faculty in fall 2008 using both Achieving the Dream and Title V grant funds.

Colleges' Progress in Implementing Strategies

Toward the end of the first implementation year, in spring 2008, the research team evaluated the progress of strategy implementation. At that time, all of the colleges had begun at least preliminary implementation of at least one strategy as part of Achieving the Dream. The progress on implementation is discussed below, with strategy implementation categorized into three levels: under development, partial implementation, and full implementation.

Strategies Under Development

For most colleges, the analysis during the planning year revealed poor student outcomes overall and noticeable achievement gaps, but it produced no obvious or quick-fix solutions. By spring 2008 many colleges were still grappling with how to use their limited resources to design and implement strategies that best met the needs of their students. For these colleges, the planning of initiative strategies extended into the implementation year, with most strategies still mostly in the planning stage.

Four of the 13 colleges were still in this early implementation phase; the colleges had staff working on the strategies and were in the process of making preliminary steps toward implementation, but the majority of their strategies were still under development. Colleges with strategies in this early implementation phase often expressed a need for additional research and planning time. Other colleges were reviewing potential changes in institutional policies. Several college strategies required additional training for staff involved. For example, one college was

still preparing a strategy linking and sequencing developmental English and math courses with a three-hour freshman seminar. The college's progress with implementing this strategy stalled because of turnover among the project leadership. "Our Achieving the Dream efforts started off and stumbled. This fall [2008] really is our kick-off." Another college was creating a mentoring system around developmental math courses. At both of these institutions, extensive training and orientation for faculty was required before the strategy would begin to touch students.

Partial Implementation

Strategies were categorized as partially implemented if the colleges were still piloting them or were in the process of revising or modifying them. At 9 of the 13 colleges the majority of initiative strategies were partially implemented. The experience of a PA college that chose to revise a student success course that did not seem to be effective provides an example of a partially implemented strategy: Student outcomes data and feedback from focus groups suggested that a one-credit student success course for students of color did not appear to be benefiting students, and focus groups revealed that students were reluctant to take the course because they felt it stigmatized them. The college therefore decided to dedicate a section of the course — rather than the entire course — to Latino and African-American students.

Full Implementation

Strategies that had reached the college's proposed scale and target population were categorized as fully implemented. While three PA and two WA colleges had at least one strategy that had been fully implemented by spring 2008, none of the colleges had a majority of their strategies fully implemented. The few strategies that had been fully implemented were generally those with which the colleges had some experience in the past, those that represented a change in college policy or procedures, or were professional development activities for faculty and staff. For example, four colleges introduced professional development activities and two fully implemented them. The fully-implemented activities were diversity training at a small, rural college and IR staff training on how to increase productivity at a college with limited resources and a growing demand for data. Each activity addressed needs and concerns specific to the institution and had a goal of addressing that pressing need in a short period of time.

Factors Affecting Strategy Implementation

The previous chapter described several factors that influenced college progress in identifying student achievement gaps and developing strategies for addressing priority problems. This section describes how several of those same factors were also key to college progress in the implementation of initiative strategies. In addition, this section explains how

collaboration between faculty and student services staff and efforts at recruitment of students into strategies affected the progress of colleges during the implementation year.

Faculty Engagement as a Spur to Strategy Implementation

Achieving the Dream encourages broad-based engagement of college personnel in implementing and assessing the effectiveness of strategies. Eight of the PA and WA colleges had successfully engaged faculty and staff in implementing initiative strategies. A core group of faculty at one PA college described a feeling of ownership of the initiative, which motivated the group to design and implement a key developmental education strategy. The college's faculty had historically not been consulted about how students were placed into developmental education and had little experience evaluating the developmental education program. The college hired a new president just prior to joining the initiative, and faculty and staff reported that the president was dedicated to improving developmental education and was receptive to faculty and staff input. He allowed developmental education faculty to take ownership of strategy development and encouraged faculty buy-in and involvement. A reading instructor said: "What's important is that the college has clearly stated that this is a faculty-driven initiative. We present what we've been doing. They let us put this together. This has been a major plus." According to a faculty member on the core team, a majority of the college's faculty was involved in the implementation of at least one strategy: "Sixty-five percent of the [full-time] faculty are involved. I'm confident about this number. We just checked."

Even among colleges that successfully engaged faculty and staff, several had difficulty initially in recruiting faculty to implement strategies. At one college, few faculty and staff were showing up for professional development activities, one of the college's strategies. The IR director of the college said the professional development sessions were "loosely mandated," but few faculty were taking part: "People are not participating. In opening sessions at the beginning of the semester, it's administrators and a few faculty who are living the message. Those faculty who are not there are in most need of the message." At a second college, in-fighting between faculty members of one department had stalled implementation of one of the college's strategies.

Some college faculty and counselors considered participation in Achieving the Dream strategies as an add-on to their already full workday schedules. For example, a few college personnel were concerned that the initiative would be another temporary fad, and were thus reluctant to commit time and energy to the effort. As mentioned in the previous chapter, one PA college instructor indicated that he had seen many previous student success efforts fall by the wayside at that college after the initial excitement waned:

> Faculty are concerned about investing in initiatives. In the past when we have done so much with learning communities [and] active learning, then nothing changes. Faculty are afraid that we will invest all this energy that we don't really have in Achieving the Dream. And then next year we won't have the resources to follow through.

The college's recent history of several failed or unresponsive presidencies contributed to widespread cynicism. Another faculty member at the college echoed this sentiment: "We have limited time and energy, and I get the feeling that the faculty, who have been here a while, have tried many things, and seen things float away into the mist, and they are reluctant to begin again."

Other faculty and staff were committed to the initiative, but were simply stretched thin with their current job responsibilities. Because administrators, faculty, and staff at several colleges suggested that the initiative required too much time and effort, providing release time might facilitate increased participation. One faculty member, speaking about professional development activities, put it bluntly: "If you want faculty to do more, there needs to be a top-down incentive."

Student Services Staff Engagement as a Spur to Strategy Implementation

At some of the colleges that were further along in strategy implementation, the colleges had engaged student services staff in student success efforts and had built strong collaboration between faculty and student services personnel. At 6 of the 13 colleges, Achieving the Dream substantially increased student services involvement in student success efforts, and at 6 colleges the initiative strengthened collaboration between faculty and student services. Several colleges were making progress in breaking down divisional silos. Student affairs personnel at one college, for example, discussed the improved communication between faculty and student services in revising their advising program for developmental education students:

> Achieving the Dream as an initiative has buy-in across campus. Faculty have a greater understanding of the student affairs role as a result of their involvement in the respective interventions. It has broken down some of the barriers between academics and student affairs.

A student affairs colleague at the same college added: "There is more willingness to pick up the telephone and ask questions rather than making assumptions which often turn out to be wrong." Learning communities, which link developmental math and English courses, college success courses, and introductory college-level courses, were another type of strategy that required collaboration among a range of faculty and student services personnel. Four of the 13

colleges developed learning communities to help academically underprepared students. The colleges that had good collaboration across the various academic and student affairs divisions had made greater progress in implementing their learning communities.

At a few colleges, inadequate collaboration between faculty and student services staff negatively impacted implementation, particularly across strategies that required personnel from various academic and student services departments to work together. At one college an administrator described the lack of collaboration between faculty and counselors who were jointly responsible for advising students:

> We don't have that sense of community. I don't know if it's an "us against them" or lack of time. They don't communicate across lines. I think a lot of time change will happen and the information won't get to the advisors. They need to have the information before advising begins. So, in advising I don't think they step out of their areas of comfort and seek out information from the departments. I don't see that happening.

Delayed Strategy Implementation Resulting from Personnel Turnover

Considerable turnover in key personnel, a factor that delayed the collection and data analysis for some colleges during the planning year, also delayed strategy implementation at three colleges. In the most extreme case, turnover among college administrators involved in the initiative meant that the college had to essentially start again from the beginning of the planning stage during the first implementation year, having piloted only one or two strategies on a very limited scale. An administrator at this college explained: "It started off really well, then staff left and it all fell apart. People haven't done as much since that time."

Colleges' Difficulty in Recruiting Students into Initiative Strategies

At least three colleges reported difficulty recruiting students into their strategies. For example, a PA college delayed the implementation of three learning communities planned for spring 2008 because there was insufficient student enrollment. The same college developed a two-week math "boot camp" — a short, intensive course focused on basics (mostly arithmetic) that students could take between or just prior to a regular semester to help them place into a higher-level math course. The intensive math course was offered at no cost to students during the summer, yet it failed to generate much interest from developmental math students. An administrator at the college said 15 students registered for the course, but several never showed up and others dropped it. Similarly, another college faced challenges recruiting students to participate in key advising and tutoring strategy sessions that were originally planned for outside of regularly scheduled class time. A faculty member said:

> Students have been very unresponsive to incentives — we offered them priority registration, a bookstore gift certificate, free pizza for a focus group with a gift card. They say "yes we'd come." And then only one person showed up. We keep trying to find out what is going on. Our sample size is so small. But we really don't know why they aren't responding. That is part of what motivated the decision to move to in-class interventions.

College officials hypothesized that work and family responsibilities interfered with the ability of students to engage in out-of-class support systems. To help ensure participation, one-on-advising, tutoring, and mentoring were built directly into the in-class portion of the learning communities strategy.

Evaluation of Strategies

Several colleges had begun at least preliminary evaluation of their strategies. Yet, because many of the colleges faced delays in implementing their strategies, they generally had few evaluation results by the time of the research team visits in spring 2008.

Five of the colleges had formal plans for evaluating their strategies, but only two had developed what the research team considered to be sound evaluation designs.

Several colleges had little prior experience in evaluating program outcomes, and they often lacked institutional research capacity to conduct high-quality evaluations of the strategies. At just over half of the colleges, overburdened IR staff and turnover among IR personnel hindered the evaluation of strategies. Weak collaboration between IR and faculty/staff was also an issue, with several colleges piloting interventions without much thought about proper research design. Bringing faculty and IR staff together at the "front end" would have had several potential benefits, including: facilitating IR-faculty collaboration toward more sophisticated program evaluation; encouraging faculty to think about program evaluation; increasing the likelihood that the evaluation is actually carried out; and decreasing the number of poorly thought-out data requests from instructors.

Poor relations between administration and faculty also hindered efforts to evaluate strategies. At one college, tension between the administration (including IR) and faculty resulted in a math intervention with inadequate evaluation planning — essentially the math department assumed responsibility for the evaluation. The IR director was uncertain about the evaluation design and had not seen any results.

Scope of Targeted Population for Strategies

The Achieving the Dream strategies being implemented at about half of the colleges tended to still be in the early pilot stages, affecting a relatively small group of students thus far. Some faculty from at least one college questioned the amount of resources spent on the initiative, considering the relatively few students touched up to that point. One faculty member said, "The numbers have been really small for the amount of effort that has been expended. I have real concerns about what's going to come out of this given the small numbers."

Seven of the colleges had at least one or two strategies that were reaching large numbers of students. For example, one PA college was implementing the following strategies: requiring all entering students to take a placement test; aligning developmental education, gatekeeper math, and English curricula; and ending late registration. Faculty at another PA college reviewed research that showed students who registered late tended to have high failure rates, which led to a campus-wide policy to no longer allow late registration after the first day of class.

Plans for Scaling Up Strategies

A risk that the colleges faced was that Achieving the Dream-supported activities would cease once the grant funding runs out. Several colleges were under financial pressures or lacked discretionary funds, raising the question about the sustainability of their strategies. The current economic downturn means that there are likely to be further reductions, perhaps severe in some cases, in state spending for community and technical colleges. College leaders and senior administrators may hesitate to devote long-term funds to initiative-driven programs for fear they might not be able to continue funding after the Achieving the Dream grant expires. Yet, scaling up the successful strategies would be difficult without additional resources. One president said:

> Money from Achieving the Dream is a pittance. We would love to get Title III to make this sustainable and take it to scale. What's missing in our program: to put a body to a body, peer support, faculty, and staff advisors, etc. We need dollars for human resources.

With a handful of exceptions, few of the colleges had given much thought to bringing successful strategies to scale. Most colleges were still in the planning and early implementation phase and were experimenting with small-scale strategies to see what worked. The vice president of instruction at a WA college explained:

> My impression is that we have a planning year and four years of implementation. For the first two years we are going to test and experiment with a wide variety of approaches. In the third year we will look at what we want to institutionalize, and test it. And then by the fourth year we would be in a position to know what we want to do. That seems to be consistent with what other colleges are doing, based on feedback from the Strategy Institute.

The exceptions were generally the colleges that already had experience with a particular strategy prior to Achieving the Dream and had in place a supportive infrastructure. One WA college was scaling up its college success skills course after finding improved outcomes for students who took it. The college compared the term-to-term retention and success rates of first-time students who completed the course with those who did not complete it and found a 20 percent higher persistence rate for those who completed the course. Because of this finding, the number of sections of college success skills courses were to be increased in fall 2008, and students considered to be most at-risk would be required to enroll in the course. Yet, faculty and staff at the college reported being already stretched thin with their workloads.

The experience of one large urban college in PA that proposed requiring all incoming students to take a student success course suggests the difficulties that can arise from campus-wide interventions that lack adequate planning and resources. A student services staff member at the college said:

> Too many students don't know how to negotiate the college. We looked at requiring them to take a one-credit college survival course. We didn't think it through. We weren't prepared to implement a policy where we didn't have enough faculty, enough sections. What were the penalties? We decided to go back to the drawing board so we can better identify the students who can best benefit from that course.

Furthermore, while a few colleges had begun thinking about scaling up successful strategies, only two colleges appeared to have a plan for doing so. At one PA college the provost made sure that during the design phase the college thought about how to scale up each of its strategies, including the budgetary implications. She tried to not pilot a strategy that she could not scale up. For example, faculty wanted 20 percent release time to oversee students in supplemental instruction; she concluded that the college could not afford to do that over time. Instead, she found a graduate student to hire as a part-time supplemental instruction coordinator. A WA college was in the process of scaling up its advising strategy, yet the college was having difficulty. Its director of IE said the college was struggling to recruit volunteer advisors beyond the initial cohort that signed up to participate in the pilot intervention.

Comparison of PA and WA College Strategies with Round 1 College Strategies

Types of Strategies Implemented

The PA and WA colleges and the Round 1 cohort of Achieving the Dream colleges implemented similar strategies. College personnel at several of the PA and WA institutions suggested that the design of their strategies was influenced by the Achieving the Dream Strategy Institute, where they had the opportunity to learn from colleagues at colleges that joined Achieving the Dream in the first two rounds.

The WA and PA college strategies were particularly focused on helping developmental education students complete their colleges' developmental education sequence of courses and succeed in college-level courses. The Round 1 colleges focused many of their strategies on helping developmental education students as well. The Round 1 baseline implementation report found that strategies often reached developmental education students via course restructuring, learning communities, supplemental instruction, and intensive advising. Yet, the WA and PA colleges were focused to a greater degree than the first-round colleges on reforming the content of their developmental education courses and the sequence of developmental education courses; 9 of the 13 PA and WA colleges focused their developmental education efforts in that area, compared to just 9 of the 27 Round 1 colleges. The WA and PA colleges were also more likely to focus their efforts on improving student performance in developmental math. All but one of the WA and PA colleges designed and implemented a developmental education strategy.

Several strategies were found with similar frequency across the Round 1 and the WA and PA colleges. For example, college success courses were a popular strategy among the PA and WA colleges; 6 of the PA and WA colleges designed or revised a new college success course, as did 16 of the 27 Round 1 colleges. Eight Round 1 colleges implemented supplemental instruction, as did 4 of the PA and WA colleges. Eleven of the Round 1 colleges implemented learning communities, compared with 4 of the PA and WA colleges. Six Round 1 colleges offered tutoring, compared with 2 of the PA and WA colleges.

A few strategies were less prevalent among the PA and WA colleges. For example, early alert was more popular among Round 1 colleges as a means to reduce student attrition. Eight of the Round 1 colleges implemented early alert, compared with just two PA and WA colleges. Twenty-two Round 1 colleges reported using Achieving the Dream funds for professional development activities, compared with only four of the PA and WA colleges.

Progress in Implementing Strategies

The PA and WA colleges and the Round 1 colleges had made similar progress in developing and implementing their strategies by the end of the initiative's first implementation year. The Round 1 baseline implementation report found that the first cohort of Achieving the Dream colleges had made progress in developing strategies, but that the colleges still had a lot of work to do to implement their strategies and bring them to scale. The Round 1 research team wrote:

> The majority [of Round 1 colleges] can be characterized as either (1) having partially implemented their strategies, meaning implementation was occurring on a small scale, or (2) being in the early phases of implementation, meaning planning was still the main focus but staff had been dedicated to the effort and implementation plans were fully fleshed out.[14]

The research team's visits to the PA and WA colleges found that few of the colleges' strategies had been fully implemented by spring 2008. While five of the colleges had at least one strategy that had been fully implemented — the strategies had reached the college's proposed scale and target population — most of the strategies at each college were either still in development or were only partially implemented.

Evaluation and Scaling Up of Successful Strategies

By the end of the first implementation year, both the PA and WA colleges and the Round 1 colleges had only minimal evaluation results from their strategies. Only about one fourth of the Round 1 colleges had developed plans for evaluating the effectiveness and impact of their strategies. Similarly, only four of the PA and WA colleges had designed formal evaluation plans at the time of the research team's visit, with three of the colleges producing some early evaluation results from their strategies.

The Round 1 baseline report suggested that the colleges still had a lot of work to do to bring strategies to scale. The Round 1 research team reported that "strategies that reach a large proportion of the student population appear to be the exception rather than the rule." The PA and WA colleges were at a similar stage, with few of the colleges thinking seriously about bringing their strategies to scale, and only a couple having a solid plan to do so.

[14]Brock et al. (2007), pp. 96-97.

Summary

The PA and WA colleges followed the Round 1 colleges in implementing a wide variety of student success strategies. Most PA and WA colleges focused their efforts on improving student outcomes in developmental education, and in developmental math in particular. While Round 1 colleges also designed strategies to help developmental education students, the WA and PA colleges were more focused on reforming both the content and sequence of their developmental education courses.

The PA and WA colleges and the Round 1 colleges had made similar progress implementing their strategies. All of the PA and WA colleges had implemented at least one strategy at the time of the research team's visit, but few had reached the planned scale and target population. Instead, most colleges had only partially implemented their strategies — they were either still piloting them or were in the process of revising and improving them. A couple of colleges in both PA and WA were still in the planning stage, with most of their strategies remaining largely under development. Turnover among college personnel and inadequate staffing were key factors in the delay of implementation at these colleges.

Because many of the PA and WA colleges experienced delays in implementing their strategies, colleges generally had few evaluation results by the time of the research team's visits in spring 2008. Moreover, few of them had formal plans for evaluating their strategies, and only two had developed what the research team considered to be sound designs for evaluating their strategies. At more than half of the colleges, overburdened IR staff and turnover among IR personnel hindered the evaluation of strategies. Weak collaboration between IR and faculty/staff was also an issue, with several colleges piloting interventions without much thought about proper research design. While a few colleges had begun thinking about scaling up successful strategies, only two colleges appeared to have a plan for doing so in order to reach substantial numbers of students.

Chapter 6

Progress Toward Institutionalizing a Culture of Evidence

This chapter assesses the extent to which the PA and WA colleges began to implement step 5 of the Achieving the Dream improvement process: institutionalize a culture of evidence on their campuses. It also compares the progress of the PA and WA colleges with that of the Round 1 colleges at a similar stage in the initiative.

Analysis of the Colleges' Progress

The fieldwork at the PA and WA colleges was structured using the Achieving the Dream *Framework for Improving Student Outcomes and Institutional Performance*. The framework presents the initiative's culture of evidence model of institutional effectiveness, described in the Introduction of this report. Following the visits to each college, the research team wrote a field report assessing the extent to which the college had implemented practices associated with the principles of initiative's model. The team then rated each college and its practices using the tool presented in Appendix A, based on the framework. Note that the research team made its assessment based on the college's status with respect to implementing policies and practices associated with the initiatives culture of evidence model, whether or not their efforts were the result of work on Achieving the Dream.

Overall Assessment

Tables C.1 and C.2 in Appendix C show the detailed results from the research team's ratings for the PA and WA colleges, respectively, using the tool we developed to measure implementation of the Achieving the Dream model of effective institutions (see Appendix A). Based on these ratings and associated field notes, the research team classified the colleges by their progress in institutionalizing a culture of evidence, as shown in Table 6.1. As of the time of our visits in spring 2008, the research team rated 2 of the 13 PA and WA colleges as having made little or no progress toward institutionalizing a culture of evidence; 3 as having made limited progress, although major obstacles remained; 4 as having made promising progress; and 4 as having begun to institutionalize a culture of evidence on their campuses.

Table 6.1

Achieving the Dream Colleges in Pennsylvania and Washington State:

Progress Toward Institutionalizing a Culture of Evidence

Extent of Progress	Pennsylvania Colleges	Washington Colleges
Little or no progress	1	1
Limited progress, major obstacles remain	1	2
Promising progress, some obstacles remain	3	1
Beginning to institutionalize a culture of evidence	2	2

Factors That Distinguish Leaders from Laggards

There are a number of differences between the colleges that were making solid progress toward developing a culture of evidence and those that were not. They are discussed below and shown in Tables C.1 and C.2.

Leadership commitment to making necessary changes

In colleges that were progressing, the president and other leaders not only said that they were committed to student outcomes, they acted on their convictions, showing a willingness to make substantive changes in institutional policy and practice and to make the investment of resources necessary to support such changes. For example, the president of one PA college established "process management" teams to review the college's policies and procedures and identify changes that would promote student success. During the planning year, these teams examined both quantitative and qualitative data, researched promising practices, and made recommendations to the college's administrative council. Based on the recommendations from these teams, the college established more consistent grading standards for faculty, revised the college's developmental placement policies based on analysis of cut scores, and upgraded the course registration system to ensure that students followed policies.

Faculty and staff engagement

One of the clearest differences is that colleges that were making progress toward building a culture of evidence were more effective in involving faculty and student services staff in efforts to improve student success. A PA college that made some of the most progress toward institutionalizing a culture of evidence organized its Achieving the Dream activities to comprise wide involvement by faculty and staff in improving student success. During the planning year, Achieving the Dream was introduced in the fall convocation and reinforced through in-service professional development activities throughout the year. As described in Chapter 4, the college established five work groups, each focused on one of the Achieving the Dream performance measures. Over 90 faculty and staff members from across the college participated in these groups, which analyzed data provided by the college's institutional effectiveness staff and recommended strategies for implementation under Achieving the Dream.

While that college was exemplary in its faculty and staff engagement efforts, the other colleges that were moving toward institutionalizing the Achieving the Dream culture of evidence model also made headway in engaging faculty and staff. In contrast, none of the five colleges that lagged in their efforts to build a culture of evidence made much progress in engaging faculty. Indeed, at four of them, top administrators seemed genuinely committed to the Achieving the Dream goals for improving success, but faced resistance from faculty. As discussed in Chapter 4, at one of these colleges the initial planning and implementation of Achieving the Dream was perceived as top-down, which caused substantial faculty opposition to the initiative that was still evident during the research team's visit. At another college, with a history of conflict between administration and the faculty, the faculty members whom we interviewed indicated that they viewed any initiative coming from "the top" with suspicion. Some indicated that they saw Achieving the Dream as yet another effort by the administration to impose reform, saying that skeptics referred to the initiative as "Achieving the Daydream." According to administrators, the coach and data facilitator encouraged the college to downplay Achieving the Dream as a separate new initiative and instead to emphasize the student success goals of the initiative in discussions with faculty and staff.

Collaboration between faculty and student services staff

Collaboration between faculty and student services staff on student success efforts was also stronger at the leader colleges. For example, the IR director at one WA leader college discussed how Achieving the Dream, by its explicit focus on barriers to student success, had improved collaboration across the institution:

> Seeing those barriers and dealing with those barriers explicitly has been a result of Achieving the Dream and [has] moved the college forward in breaking down silos. Before, that happened on an individual basis, but not across the institution. Achieving the Dream has moved the process forward much faster.

Laggard colleges, conversely, often struggled to overcome the "silos" between academic and student affairs that characterize many community colleges. For example, faculty leaders at one college rejected efforts by student services staff to offer an improved college success course. Even at leader colleges there seemed to be room for improvement on this front.

Cross-division communication

In general, communication across divisions seemed to be stronger at the leader colleges than at the laggards. Perhaps reflecting this difference, the leader colleges were more likely to have in place committees for bringing together personnel from across the institution to work on student success. For example, to ensure that the work of collecting and analyzing data on student success was institutionalized, one college converted its data team into a standing "institutional assessment council," with responsibility to continue analyzing data on student success, reviewing results from evaluations (conducted according to a master evaluation plan established through Achieving the Dream) and making recommendations for improvement to the college's planning council, which was the institutionalized version of the Achieving the Dream core team. Prior to joining the initiative, one WA college had established a "student outcomes commission," comprised primarily of faculty, that used data to monitor student progress and the effectiveness of efforts to improve student success. The commission analyzed student outcomes even at the level of instructor and section. When the college joined Achieving the Dream, the commission became more consistent in disaggregating data by student characteristics and as a result uncovered achievement gaps that were not recognized before. According to faculty and administrators we interviewed, the commission was widely respected at the college and had a lot of clout on decisions related to student success.

Institutional research and information technology capacity

The experience of the PA and WA colleges indicated that having strong IR capacity was helpful, but not sufficient, in building a culture of evidence. It was also essential to use the data collected as a basis for decision making.

Indeed, two of the colleges that made limited progress at best in implementing culture of evidence practices had relatively strong IR staffs. The IR office in one of these colleges was readily able to carry out the longitudinal tracking and other analyses recommended by Achieving the Dream, but the college was not able to act on this information until a new

president arrived to replace the previous CEO, who had resigned and was reportedly not disposed to making decisions based on data. Another laggard college had perhaps the strongest IR department of any of the 13 colleges we studied. It was doing longitudinal tracking of student cohorts and other sophisticated analysis of student outcomes long before the college joined Achieving the Dream. However, the IR director was not part of the president's cabinet, and neither the senior leadership nor the faculty and staff seemed to rely much on the information produced by the IR office in decision making. The challenge at this college was not getting data or doing research, but using the information produced by the IR office to improve programs and services.

At the same time, some of the colleges did struggle with a lack of IR capacity. For example, one WA college was only able to make limited progress in building a culture of evidence because the IR director, like many staff members at this small, rural college, had to "wear many hats," making it difficult to find time do the sorts of data analysis called for by Achieving the Dream. At least three other colleges struggled because of the turnover among, or limited capabilities, in their IR staffs. A rural PA college was unable to fill its IR staff position despite continuing efforts to do so. In lieu of an IR staff, the college relied on faculty and staff participation in "process management teams" to examine data on student outcomes and research promising practices for overcoming the achievement gaps identified. In addition, the college restructured the job duties of an information technology (IT) analyst to that of a data mining specialist to do quantitative data analyses that would have been done by an IR staff person. Some of that person's IT duties were redistributed to other staff. Thus, it was able to make promising progress toward building a culture of evidence despite limited IR capacity.

All six WA colleges and two of the PA colleges struggled with antiquated information technology (IT) systems. Nevertheless, some of them were able to find ways to get the information they needed to identify gaps in student achievement and devise strategies for addressing them.

Evidence-based program review and planning

Leader colleges were more likely to have implemented evidence-based program review and strategic planning systems than were colleges that had not made much progress in implementing the Achieving the Dream institutional effectiveness model. Yet, having a strategic planning process in place was not sufficient to bring about changes in programs and services. The president of the WA college that made the least progress in implementing the Achieving the Dream model established a strategic planning process five years ago. It was not clear how much the process relied on evidence of student success, though the process did include setting measurable goals and objectives; still, it did not seem to have had much effect on efforts to improve student success.

In general, evidenced-based budgeting was not well developed at any of the colleges, although two of the PA colleges were moving in that direction.

Professional development to support a culture of evidence

Most of the colleges were just beginning to consider how they could design professional development activities to promote a culture of evidence on their campuses. A PA college located in a depressed part of the state had a leadership academy that it used to develop leaders from within. One recent project of rising administrators who were taking part in the academy was "Building a Culture of Evidence," in which participants developed and implemented projects that exemplified effective data collection and evidence-based decision making. The results of these projects were later shared with the college and board of trustees.

Comparison with Round 1 Colleges

In the baseline evaluation of the first-round Achieving the Dream colleges, CCRC and MDRC categorized the Round 1 colleges using a taxonomy somewhat similar to the one used in this study of the PA and WA colleges (Tables C.1 and C.2). The authors of the report[15] on that earlier study classified the 27 Round 1 colleges as follows:

- Six Round 1 colleges "were making clear progress toward institutionalizing a 'culture of evidence'" in that they were engaging faculty and staff on a substantial scale in using data and working together to improve student success, and had begun to use evidence of student outcomes as the basis for academic program evaluation, strategic planning, and budgeting.
- Five had taken the important steps of engaging faculty and staff in the analysis of data on student outcomes and of adopting evidence-based strategic planning procedures.
- Ten had some of the building blocks of a culture in evidence in place, including a well-developed institutional research capability and strategic planning process, but none had engaged a broad segment of faculty and staff in using data to improve programs and services; others were hampered by turnover of key project or college leadership.
- Six colleges had limited data collection and analysis capabilities and had not begun using data to evaluate and improve programs and services.

[15]Brock et al. (2007), pp. 91-97.

Fewer than half of the first-round colleges were making progress toward institutionalizing a culture of evidence at a similar stage of the project. In contrast, 8 of 13 Round 3 colleges were making solid progress toward institutionalizing a culture of evidence. All but two of the seven PA colleges were making good progress, although only half of the WA colleges were progressing apace. This difference in progress may have something to do with the fact that the PA colleges had to compete for the grants (and one, Allegheny, joined with its own funds). Based on this admittedly small sample, it seems as though the Round 3 colleges, and particularly the PA colleges, were making faster progress toward institutionalizing a culture of evidence. From our interviews with them, the PA and WA colleges (and presumably their coaches and data facilitators as well) seem to have benefited from the experiences of the earlier-round colleges. Still, as in the first round, there was a group of PA and WA colleges that were not making good progress. Whether they can catch up, and whether the colleges that were progressing can maintain their momentum, are questions to be answered in a second wave of research to be conducted by CCRC and MDRC in two years.

Summary

At the time of our visits in spring 2008 the research team rated 2 of the 13 PA and WA colleges as having made little or no progress toward institutionalizing a culture of evidence; 3 as having made limited progress, although major obstacles remained; 4 as having made promising progress; and 4 as having begun to institutionalize a culture of evidence on their campuses. The factors that distinguished colleges in the two top groups from those in the bottom groups included the following: leaders committed to making substantial changes in policy and investing the resources needed to support such changes, greater engagement of faculty and staff in the improvement process, strong collaboration between faculty and student services staff, and good communication across departments and divisions.

Based on this limited sample, it seems that the PA and WA colleges, which joined the initiative in the third round, were, as a group, making faster progress toward institutionalizing a culture of evidence than the colleges that joined in the first round at a similar stage in the process. Based on our interviews, the PA and WA colleges seemed to have benefited from the experiences of the colleges that joined the initiative in the first two rounds.

Chapter 7

The Impact of Achieving the Dream and Recommendations for Improvement

This chapter examines how much Achieving the Dream contributed to progress made by the colleges to date in building a culture of evidence for student success. It also considers the extent to which the Achieving the Dream activities at the PA and WA colleges were focused on increasing equity of achievement among students by race and ethnicity and by income, as opposed to improving outcomes for all students. It further assesses how much Achieving the Dream coaching and other supports helped colleges progress toward the goal of closing the achievement gap. The chapter concludes with recommendations for additional actions that the Achieving the Dream initiative and the colleges themselves can take to increase the likelihood for fundamental improvement in outcomes.

Initial Effects of Achieving the Dream

Achieving the Dream has had positive effects on nearly all of the PA and WA colleges involved, including those that made little or no overall progress toward institutionalizing a culture of evidence.

Effect on the Colleges Beginning to Institutionalize a Culture of Evidence

The four colleges identified in Chapter 6 as those that made the greatest progress toward institutionalizing a culture of evidence had already taken steps toward the goals of Achieving the Dream before they became involved in the initiative. Even so, Achieving the Dream helped to accelerate the transformation at all of them.

For example, the president of one of these colleges, located in PA, had made, as a centerpiece of her administration, a focus on student success and "management by fact," spearheading a student success initiative even before the college joined Achieving the Dream. The college had an "institutional effectiveness model" with performance metrics that it used to measure progress toward the goals of its strategic plan. The college had a strong institutional research (IR) department that had collected and analyzed longitudinal data for some time as part of its institutional effectiveness model. Data on the performance metrics, as well as a host of information on student performance in the college's "fact book," were widely available to college personnel through the college's intranet. The college used this information extensively in program review and strategic planning.

Even though this college was already moving in the direction of building a culture of evidence before it joined the initiative, Achieving the Dream provided a framework for analyzing data on students that had been lacking, according to individuals we interviewed at the college. The college used the Achieving the Dream performance measures to gauge its progress, drawing on data in the "monster database" that it established for tracking students. The college was also taking steps to make data on student progression and outcomes more accessible to faculty and staff.

According to the president and other individuals we interviewed at the second PA college that was beginning to institutionalize a culture of evidence, Achieving the Dream had helped to increase discussions about student success across the campus. The dean of student affairs at the college said: "I truly think that one of the things that is happening is that we as an institution are talking about student success across the institution, and that in itself is a change." As a result of Achieving the Dream, IR was more integrally involved in management decisions, rather than playing a background supporting role as in the past. The college was also using the Achieving the Dream goals and institutional improvement process as the framework for its strategic planning, budgeting, and reaccreditation efforts.

Achieving the Dream was also providing a framework for student success efforts at a WA college with a culture of multicultural inclusion and commitment to success for all students that predated Achieving the Dream. The college's leadership used the initiative as an opportunity to bring together and strengthen the many existing strands of work focused on improving student progress and outcomes and to do so through increased evidence-based decision making. According to college leaders, before it joined the initiative, the college had used data for decision making, but in a limited fashion. As a result of Achieving the Dream, use of data became much more systematic, and it was expected that decision makers would use evidence to inform their decisions about programs and services. According to the IR director at the college:

> There was no systematic plan for identifying achievement gaps. As problems or specific issues emerged, like students on probation, research would head in that direction, but it wasn't a systematic review process. The implementation of our data team really got our analytical resources together to look at our data, disaggregate it, and to look at our achievement gaps and to decide on what interventions we wanted to adopt. The Achieving the Dream structure focused us on the gaps we want to address.

Senior college administrators said that Achieving the Dream also led to a shift from anecdote to evidence in the college's program review and strategic planning process. The vice president for student affairs said that participation in the initiative stimulated increased use of

data by her staff, who were using the Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE) and other information to see how student services could be strengthened.

The other WA college that moved to institutionalize culture of evidence practices had a tradition of monthly campus-wide meetings where faculty and staff discussed student success issues. However, in the past IR had not played a prominent part in these discussions, and there was no systematic evaluation of program effectiveness to inform them. The vice president of instruction said that in the past institution-wide decision making had largely been made by "gut instinct" and there had not been a strong culture of using data and research. Achieving the Dream led the college to strengthen its IR office and refocused IR efforts from a primary emphasis on compliance reporting toward using research on students to inform improvements in programs and services. According to the new director of institutional research, previous evaluation efforts at the college were not systematic in nature, but rather tended to focus on specific programs. The IR staff is trying to help their colleagues throughout the college ask questions of the data that are more aligned with the college's goals for improved student success.

Effect on Colleges Making Promising Progress

The four colleges that made promising progress toward building a culture of evidence (though they still faced obstacles) all began essentially from scratch when they joined the initiative. Indeed, three of them had had no IR staff.

The president of one of these colleges indicated that she was initially skeptical about the need to establish an IR office, believing that college personnel knew what worked and what did not. Encouragement from the coach and data facilitator, combined with the initial experience of using data during the planning year, convinced the president of the need for an IR office. The college appointed a well-respected faculty leader to head a new office of institutional effectiveness (IE). The IE director made regular presentations to internal college constituencies about using data and designing interventions, and, according to faculty members we interviewed, they and their colleagues have begun to "embrace evidence-based decision making" and the campus is now "hungry" for data.

A second college that started the initiative with no IR department probably came further than any other PA or WA college. It added a two-staff member IR office and combined IR with information technology (IT) to create a larger department focused on using data to improve programs and services. The newly formed and staffed IR office was responding to "a flood of data requests," according to the director. The IR staff was developing a website to distribute information more quickly and cut down on requests from users. Concurrent with this increased investment in IR, the college took steps to involve faculty and staff in the improvement process.

For example, during the planning year, the college convened a group of faculty to examine the college's cut score policies for its ACCUPLACER placement exam. Previously, the faculty had never been asked for input on placement policies. The experience helped developmental and college-level faculty understand the issues related to the use of the current placement test. They recognized that the mechanisms being used to place students into math courses did not make sense and that the sequence of math courses was not effective in helping students advance to college-level math. As a result, the faculty reorganized the math curriculum and was planning to evaluate the new configuration to see if student outcomes improved. Faculty we interviewed said that, through Achieving the Dream, they became aware that there was too much variation in the amount and quality of the education and services that students received, and that this variation was detrimental to student success. To achieve greater consistency across instructors and courses, the faculty had begun to work on common syllabi and expected learning outcomes for all courses.

The third college that made promising progress toward building a culture of evidence still had no IR staff, despite continuing efforts to hire personnel. As described in Chapter 6, the college organized faculty and staff into process management teams to examine the effect of college policies on student success and to recommend changes to improve programs and services.

Although the fourth promising progress college did have an IR office when it joined the initiative, the office moved beyond the compliance reporting function it primarily had in the past and assumed a much more prominent role in efforts to improve student success as a result of the college's experience with Achieving the Dream. This was the first time that the college had done longitudinal tracking of students. The achievement gaps among students by race "got people's attention," according to the vice president for academic affairs, and led to the creation of a task force on developmental education, which generated a lot of enthusiasm among faculty and staff. Also, instead of analyzing grade distributions in individual courses only, as it did in the past, the college began looking at the progression of students from one course to the next. The vice president of student services said that doing so led to a more holistic view of student success in contrast with the past, when student success efforts were mostly "boutique" efforts focused on specific groups of students. According to this vice president, there was a growing awareness at the college that bringing about change on a meaningful scale requires a holistic, "systems" approach.

Additional Effects for the PA and WA Colleges

Participation in the initiative had other benefits for the PA and WA colleges, including for the five colleges that made at most limited progress toward building a culture of evidence.

- All but one or two PA colleges, and all but one WA college, saw Achieving the Dream as an "umbrella" for other student success initiatives.
- Seven colleges added IR staff and another seven purchased data analysis software or upgraded their systems as a result of Achieving the Dream.
- Achieving the Dream led six colleges to change their committee structure to allow for a greater focus on student success.
- Respondents at four of the PA colleges and all of the WA colleges said that involvement in the initiative was helping their college prepare for or comply with accreditation requirements.
- Respondents at four of the PA colleges and all of the WA colleges said that the initiative was helping them meet statewide performance accountability requirements. All six WA colleges mentioned that Achieving the Dream was providing a framework for college efforts to improve student outcomes under the state's new Student Achievement Initiative, a new performance funding policy that rewards colleges for improving the rate at which students progress through college.

Leadership turnover and somewhat strained relations between faculty and administrators caused one PA college to make only limited progress toward institutionalizing a culture of evidence. Achieving the Dream nevertheless helped the college's research staff become much more proactive in efforts to improve student outcomes. The interim vice president for student development described the impact of the initiative:

> We have been lackadaisical about evaluating our programs. Achieving the Dream comes in and says "not only do you need to evaluate your learning and services, we also want you to be responsible for improving those outcomes." Our research end was not focused on the learning environment. So [the initiative] came in and really centered us. Some of the changes we took on [as a result of the data analysis done under Achieving the Dream] were monumental, such as late registration. We have changed the policy so that a D in developmental education is no longer a passing grade. Now we are working on the first-year experience. It got us on the path of doing some things we needed to do for all our programs. We are much more data-focused than we were before.

Emphasis on Equity

Two of the PA colleges and four of the WA colleges developed student success strategies designed expressly to address gaps in achievement by race/ethnicity or income. Most of them based these strategies on analyses of student outcomes data that indicated gaps in achievement among minority or low-income students. For example, an administrator at a WA college said her college's strategies were based on data showing that low-income students and students of color were struggling. She said that Achieving the Dream "shed light on practices in basic skills areas, basic skills courses, how they were affecting minorities and low SES students. It brought to light things that were not at the forefront. It was very shocking to many on campus."

Most of the colleges in both states did not attempt to make inequities in achievement a college-wide focus and priority, however. One exception was a WA college that came to Achieving the Dream with a strong culture of multicultural inclusion and a commitment to success for all students, including those who faced substantial barriers to success. Although this priority predated Achieving the Dream, the initiative was seen by many of the individuals we interviewed as a framework for connecting the many efforts on campus to improve outcomes for disadvantaged students.

The president at a PA college tried to shed light on the problem of achievement gaps between white and minority students by, among other efforts, establishing a "diversity council." However, the president was not satisfied that the college was doing enough to address the issue.

A vice president of instruction and student services at a WA college described how Achieving the Dream allowed the college to have difficult conversations about the achievement gaps in student outcomes:

> [Achieving the Dream] provided a framework for having the hard conversations about race and ethnicity and underrepresented students. You need to have the conversation about what is needed to be done differently. You have to stress that it isn't anyone's fault…. So, [the initiative] provided the framework to have those conversations, to talk about minority and low-income students. The college wasn't afraid of having those conversations as much as it didn't know how to go about having them.

Nevertheless, other personnel at this college indicated that the college still had far to go in opening the dialogue around the impact of race and ethnicity on student outcomes at the college.

As previously discussed, at some colleges concern was expressed that targeting particular groups of students for special support was unfair to other students. For example, one

WA college was struggling to figure out how to meet the needs of the college's growing Latino student population, a contentious issue at the college. The president and others wondered whether it was fair to expend a disproportionate amount of resources on a particular group of students. Further, there were only two Latino faculty members and they felt overworked in part because they were continually being asked to lead diversity efforts. They wished that the college would do more to increase diversity of the faculty and staff. However, increasing faculty and staff diversity was not a strategy being undertaken at this or any of the PA or WA colleges, at least as part of Achieving the Dream.

The Value of the Achieving the Dream Supports

Coaches and Data Facilitators

Coaches and data facilitators were seen by most colleges as a particular strength of the Achieving the Dream initiative design. Many colleges saw their coach and data facilitator as a team (probably because they often visited together), and considered them to be mentors in the institutional change process. They were generally viewed as providing both a critical, outside perspective on the college's progress, as well as serving as advocates on behalf of the college with the initiative. For example, the vice president of student services at a WA college said that the coach and data facilitator encouraged the college to dig deeper into their data on students:

> They provide a look from outside and as we ask questions they can say, "are you sure that's what your data [are] telling you?" They're good at getting us to ask those questions, [to] see things in data that you want to chase down the avenue.

At another WA college, the coach and data facilitator were instrumental in "bringing around" the president who was initially reluctant to recognize the importance of institutional research and of hiring IR staff when the college had none before.

The president of yet another WA college said of the coach and data facilitator: "They have been tremendous. Having coaches has been a great idea. This is critical. That is another reason that this initiative shines above most. I can call [our coach], president to president. She can say things to the college community that are difficult for me to say."

Coaches

Because most of the coaches were former college presidents, college leaders said that they could turn to them for practical, useful advice. According to the presidents we interviewed, the coaches helped them engage various college constituencies in the institutional improvement

process. Colleges frequently called on their coaches to make presentations and lead discussions about the initiative and its goals with college stakeholders and to try to facilitate widespread buy-in among faculty and student services staff. At several colleges, coaches spoke at college forums, including as a keynote speaker at the fall convocation of at least one college. College leaders looked to coaches to provide an outside voice to encourage faculty and staff to embrace the development of a culture of evidence.

Most of the colleges in both states were satisfied with their coaches. Two PA colleges indicated that they did not consider their coach a good fit for their institutions. The president of another PA college said that he did not call on his coach much after the planning year: "I don't know how much coaching we need. We were further along. Early in the process it was helpful; it's less necessary now that we've gotten into implementation."

Data facilitators

Similarly, all but one of the colleges found their data facilitator to be helpful. The exception was a case where a seasoned IR director at a college felt that the college's facilitator did not have enough direct experience with institutional research to be very helpful to the college.

Most of the other colleges were effusive about their data facilitators. For example, the president of a WA college said: "Our data coach came and spent three days with [our new IR director]. That was worth its weight in gold."

Multiple respondents at one WA college indicated that its data facilitator was able to serve as a helpful resource by providing examples of how other colleges approached similar challenges. The director of institutional effectiveness compared the data facilitator to a dissertation advisor: "A specialist in student success initiatives who reviews the college's plans in order to make them stronger." The director further described how the math department found the data facilitator very helpful when he met with them during the fall of the planning year to brainstorm about strategies could be piloted on a scale large enough to evaluate.

At other colleges, the data facilitator helped lend creditability to the information coming from the college's own institutional research staff. The IR staff at one WA college struggled from a lack of credibility with the college community because they were so new to the institution. The IR director said that the data facilitator was trusted as an outside authority and so his support was critical. "Because of our newness, we'd recommend something and it was sometimes challenged. A little like 'do you know what you're doing? Check with [the data facilitator].' And [the data facilitator] would back us up."

The Achieving the Dream Database

All but 2 PA colleges made some use of the national database in the initial analyses they conducted as part of the planning phase. The 2 that did not use it at all had very well developed in-house data systems and IR staff with experience doing longitudinal data analysis. Most of the other colleges relied more on their own data than on the national database. However, 5 of the 13 colleges found the Achieving the Dream database to be a useful structure for looking at own their data.

A handful of the 13 PA and WA colleges planned to use the national dataset to analyze student outcomes as they moved beyond the initial analysis for Achieving the Dream. One of the WA colleges planned to use the e-STATS data analysis software the initiative has made available to colleges to compare itself to other colleges. However, a PA IR director had tried to use e-STATS to compare her college to others and could not because the college's data presented in e-STATS seemed to have errors. This person tried unsuccessfully to get support from partner organizations.

Strategy Institutes

In general, interview respondents who attended any of the annual Achieving the Dream Strategy Institutes found them useful. Several respondents said that the opportunity to meet with colleagues from earlier-round colleges was particularly useful. A vice president of student services at a WA college said:

> I went to [the Strategy Institute in] Albuquerque.… Being in the strategy meeting with other colleges was extremely helpful — we were in meetings with people trying what we were trying and they helped us find land mines before we stepped on them. That was huge. They said no matter what we did it came back to "it's not how we experience the student that's important, it's how they experience us." When we realized that difference it changed everything we did. We looked at that and it helped us rethink where we wanted to go with our strategies. We aren't fully there yet, but we're headed in a very positive direction.

Several respondents also said that they valued having time with colleagues from their own institutions. A PA IR director said: "Being [at the institute] provided an opportunity to spend time with colleagues…. I was able to interact with coworkers differently than I do here."

Respondents at three colleges at least had more mixed reviews of the institutes. One PA president indicated that while he found the Kickoff Institute helpful, the subsequent Strategy Institute in Atlanta was not as useful. Another PA core team leader expressed frustration that

presentations at the Strategy Institute attended by college team members were too focused at the classroom level, and didn't provide enough guidance on how to bring about systemic reforms at the broader institution level.

Suggestions for Improvement

At every college we visited, we asked the individuals who were involved with Achieving the Dream if they had any suggestions for ways that the initiative or their own college performance could be improved. Some of their ideas are presented below.

Increase Opportunities to Share with Other Colleges

A very common suggestion was to increase opportunities to learn what other colleges are doing. One root of this recommendation was the colleges' curiosity about how they were progressing in the initiative compared with other colleges. Many college leaders indicated that they relied on the coaches and data facilitators to give them feedback, and that the Strategy Institute sessions were also helpful in enabling them to see how advanced other colleges were in their work. Still, they would have liked to have had more information about how much progress other colleges were making, what strategies they were pursuing, and what was working and what was not. According to the president of a WA college:

> The piece that I've been disappointed with in Achieving the Dream is the ability to share information among similar institutions, [of having] a better sense of the work and performance of other institutions that are like ours…. We [in Achieving the Dream] haven't found a way to work together nationally that has met my hopes yet. But it is a work in progress.

Increase the Use of Personnel from Achieving the Dream Colleges as Coaches for New Colleges

One college particularly benefited from having a data facilitator who was herself from a Round 1 college. The IR office, who found the facilitator especially helpful, said: "Because of her experience in a Round 1 college, she has been very helpful. She provides a lot of feedback to the college as a whole. She really knows her stuff." This was the second data facilitator that the college was assigned: "Our first data facilitator did not have that experience, so she could only be so helpful." The director, therefore, suggested that Achieving the Dream should take greater advantage of the cadre of community college personnel who were gaining experience in the initiative's approach to coach and consult with colleges that were new to the initiative.

Improve the Availability of Comparative Performance Data

Colleges also wanted to know how they were faring in terms of student outcomes. The president of a PA college said: "I'm waiting … to see more national data. That's not available to us. I'd like to get a sense of us in the larger Achieving the Dream context." As mentioned, some of the colleges that tried to do comparative analyses using e-STATS were disappointed because the data seemed to contain errors.

Expand Opportunities and Support for Faculty Involvement

Finding ways to involve faculty and staff in the process of using data to improve programs and services was perhaps the most common challenge facing the PA and WA colleges. The colleges that were further along in institutionalizing a culture of evidence had generally been more successful in engaging faculty in particular, but even for them, faculty engagement was still a work in process. Some respondents said they hoped that the initiative would provide clearer guidance to colleges on how effectively to engage faculty. Others indicated a need for more opportunities to involve faculty in discussions across campuses about Achieving the Dream goals and approaches. Some suggested that the Strategy Institutes were not an ideal forum for faculty engagement. For example, the vice president of student services at a PA college argued that pulling college personnel away from their jobs for four days during the early part of the spring term was very disruptive. Such scheduling made it especially difficult to involve faculty, who would have to miss nearly a week of teaching. The vice president suggested scheduling the Strategy Institute for early summer, after school ended. In addition, he recommended that Achieving the Dream sponsor "webinars" and shorter statewide or regional meetings for faculty and administrators during the school year.

Rethink National Expansion Plan

One PA president expressed concern about the proposal under consideration for Achieving the Dream to move to a fee-for-service model. He believed it would not attract the same level of participation, particularly for colleges that did not understand that they had an achievement gap. He further argued that there was a steep learning curve for colleges with the Achieving the Dream improvement approach. At the Atlanta Strategy Institute where this idea was first presented, he said that the consensus among presidents with whom he spoke was to continue to provide grant support for new colleges joining the initiative and then to decrease the amount of funding as the colleges gained experience with the process.

Summary

While some of the PA and WA colleges made more progress than others in moving toward a culture of evidence, Achieving the Dream has had positive effects on nearly all of the colleges. For some, the initiative provided a framework for analyzing data on student progression and outcomes that helped to focus college personnel on gaps in student achievement and motivated them to find ways to address those gaps.

Perhaps the most impressive effects were on the four colleges that had made "promising progress" (though obstacles remained) toward institutionalizing a culture of evidence. Three of these colleges had no IR staff when they began the initiative. At all four of these colleges, Achieving the Dream provided the impetus not only to strengthen IR capacity, but to give IR more of an integral role in decision making. Even among the five colleges that made little or no overall progress toward institutionalizing a culture of evidence, participating in Achieving the Dream had benefits, including helping them prepare for or comply with accreditation requirements, and providing an "umbrella" to help coordinate and focus other student success efforts at the college.

Six of the PA and WA colleges developed student success strategies designed expressly to address gaps in achievement by race/ethnicity or income. Most of the colleges in both states, however, did not attempt to make remedying inequities in achievement a college-wide focus and priority.

Most of the colleges viewed the coaches and data facilitators positively, appreciating the way they both provided a critical, outside perspective on the college's progress and served as advocates on behalf of the colleges with the initiative. Most also made some use of the national database in the initial analyses they conducted as part of the planning phase, but most of them relied more on their own data than on the national database. In general, interview respondents who attended any of the annual Achieving the Dream Institutes found them useful.

A number of individuals we interviewed at the PA and WA colleges suggested ways that the initiative could be improved. Some focused on ways for Achieving the Dream colleges to learn from each other's experience.

The PA and WA colleges clearly benefited from the experience of the colleges that joined the initiative in earlier rounds. As a group, the PA and WA colleges were further along in implementing the Achieving the Dream five-step improvement process than were the first-round colleges at a similar stage of their involvement. Our interviews at the PA and WA colleges suggest that they were able to accelerate their work on the process because of lessons learned from the earlier round colleges through conversations at the one of the Achieving the Dream Strategy Institutes and through information shared by their coaches and data facilitators.

As Achieving the Dream now enters a national expansion phase, the new colleges that join the initiative will have a great deal to learn from the experience and insights gained by the PA and WA colleges on how to transform their organizations and cultures to improve outcomes for all of their students.

Appendix A

Tool for Measuring Development of the Achieving the Dream Model of Effective Institutions

Appendix A

Tool for Measuring Development of the Achieving the Dream Model of Effective Institutions

Use the scale provided to indicate the extent to which the college has implemented or developed the practices listed under each principle of the Achieving the Dream institutional effectiveness model.

Model Principle 1: Committed Leadership

Indicator 1.1. Vision and values

		Extent of Implementation				
		Little or None 1	2	3	4	A lot 5
1.1a	President has developed a clear vision for student success with active involvement by institutional stakeholders.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
1.1b	President and senior leadership emphasize the importance of improving student outcomes, not just increasing enrollments.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
1.1c	President and other senior leaders have made an explicit policy commitment, communicated to faculty, staff, students and community, to achieve equity in student success across racial/ethnic and income groups.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Indicator 1.2. Commitment

		Extent of Implementation Little or None 1	2	3	4	A lot 5
1.2a	President and senior leaders demonstrate a willingness to support changes in organizational structures and practices as needed to support *evidence-based* improvements in programs and services.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
1.2b	President and senior leaders demonstrate willingness to support reallocation of resources as needed to support *evidence-based* improvements in programs and services.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
1.2c	Faculty leaders actively support a broad-based agenda to improve student success.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
1.2d	Board has made an explicit commitment to improve student success.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
1.2e	President regularly informs the board about outcomes of the college's students and the effectiveness of efforts to improve student success.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Model Principle 2: Use of Evidence to Improve Programs and Services

Indicator 2.1. Information technology (IT) capacity		Extent of Implementation				
		Little or None 1	2	3	4	A lot 5
2.1a	IT systems allow for user-friendly retrieval and analysis of data on groups of students by administrators, faculty, and staff.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
2.1b	IT staff capacity is adequate to meet the demand for data and institutional research.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
2.1c	Policies and procedures are in place to ensure integrity of data collected.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Indicator 2.2. Institutional research (IR) capacity

		Extent of Implementation Little or None 1	2	3	4	A lot 5
2.2a	IR staff members are adequately trained in data analysis, especially in cohort tracking techniques.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
2.2b	IR staff capacity is adequate to meet demand for data and research.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
2.2c	IR staff members are seen as responsive to requests for information from administrators, faculty, and staff.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
2.2d	IR staff members are skilled at clearly communicating research findings to key audiences.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
2.2e	IR staff routinely works with faculty and staff to analyze data on student success.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
2.2f	IR staff produces information useful for program evaluation, strategic planning, and budgeting.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
2.2g	IR staff actively educates college personnel on how to use data and research to improve programs, services, and institutional management.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
2.2h	IR staff has more than an administrative support role (i.e., not just compliance reporting); IR function is integral to the management of the institution.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Indicator 2.3. Process for identifying achievement gaps		Extent of Implementation				
		Little or None 1	2	3	4	A lot 5
2.3a	Institution regularly collects, analyzes, and reports data on the Achieving the Dream performance indicators and other student outcome measures.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
2.3b	Institution routinely collects, analyzes and reports longitudinal data on cohorts of students to chart student progress; college reports changes in performance rates for different cohorts over time.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
2.3c	Institution routinely disaggregates student cohort data by age, race, gender, income and other factors to identify gaps in achievement among student groups.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
2.3d	Institution regularly reports changes in attainment rates for entering student cohorts in one year with the rates for cohorts beginning in subsequent years.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
2.3e	Institution regularly conducts surveys and focus groups with students, faculty, and staff to identify weaknesses in programs and services and opportunities for improvement.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Comments:						

Indicator 2.4. Process for diagnosing gaps and formulating solutions

		Extent of Implementation: Little or None 1	2	Developing 3	4	A lot 5
2.4a	Institution routinely collects and uses quantitative and qualitative data to diagnose the causes of gaps in student achievement.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
2.4b	Institution has an inventory of current and past efforts to address student achievement gaps and documentation on the effectiveness of each.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
2.4c	Institution has established evidence-based process for formulating strategies to address student achievement gaps.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Indicator 2.5. Process for evaluating impact of solutions

		Extent of Implementation: Little or None 1	2	Developing 3	4	A lot 5
2.5a	Institution routinely evaluates the effectiveness of efforts to improve student success.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
2.5b	The institution's approach to evaluation is methodologically sound.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
2.5c	Institution uses the results of such evaluations to further improve policies, programs, or services.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Comments:

Model Principle 3: Broad Engagement

Indicator 3.1. Faculty

		Extent of Implementation Little or None 1	2	3	4	A lot 5
3.1a	Faculty meets regularly to examine course and program outcomes and develop strategies for improving student success.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
3.1b	Faculty uses data and research to design and evaluate programs and teaching strategies.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
3.1c	Faculty is receptive to evaluation of the effectiveness of their programs and teaching methods.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
3.1d	Faculty is centrally involved in evaluating academic programs and teaching strategies.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
3.1e	Faculty is actively involved on committees and other bodies concerned with student success.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
3.1f	A critical mass of full-time faculty regularly participates in efforts to identify, diagnose and solve problems with student achievement.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
3.1g	Part-time or adjunct faculty members are routinely informed of institutional efforts to improve student success and encouraged to participate in such efforts.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Indicator 3.2. Student services staff

		Extent of Implementation				
		Little or None 1	2	Developing 3	4	A lot 5
3.2a	Student services staff meets regularly to assess and develop strategies for improving the impact of their services on student success.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
3.2b	Student services staff uses data and research to design and evaluate services and strategies.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
3.2c	Student services staff is centrally involved in efforts to evaluate the effectiveness of student support services.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
3.2d	Student services staff is well represented on committees and other bodies concerned with student success.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Indicator 3.3. Collaboration

		Extent of Implementation				
		Little or None 1	2	Developing 3	4	A lot 5
3.3a	Faculty and student services staff regularly collaborate on efforts to improve student success.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
3.3b	Institution promotes cross-program and divisional collaboration to improve student success.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Indicator 3.4. Students

		Extent of Implementation: Little or None 1	2	3	4	A lot 5
3.4a	Institution routinely seeks input from students on ways to improve student outcomes.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
3.4b	Institution routinely invites active student participation in efforts to improve student outcomes.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
3.4c	Students are represented on committees and other bodies concerned with student success.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Comments:						

Indicator 3.5. External stakeholders

		Extent of Implementation: Little or None 1	2	3	4	A lot 5
3.5a	Institution seeks input from external stakeholders (such as other educational institutions, human service agencies, community groups, and employers) to identify causes of achievement gaps and inform the development of strategies for improving student success.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
3.5b	Institution shares data and collaborates with secondary schools, higher education institutions, workforce boards and, other outside entities for the purpose of improving student access and attainment.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
3.5c	Institution is actively involved in strategic partnerships with outside stakeholders aimed at improving student success.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Model Principle 4: Systemic Institutional Improvement

Indicator 4.1. Institutional management

		Extent of Implementation Little or None 1	2	3	4	A lot 5
4.1a	Institution has established a strategic planning process that is broadly inclusive.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
4.1b	Institution has established strategic planning process that relies on data to set goals for student success and measure goal attainment.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
4.1c	Institution regularly evaluates its academic programs to determine how well they promote student success and how they can be improved.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
4.1d	Institution regularly evaluates all of its student services to determine how well they promote student success and how they can be improved.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
4.1e	Institution uses data on program effectiveness to guide budget and resource allocation decisions.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
4.1f	The institution's leadership creates a climate that supports corrective action needed to improve student outcomes.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
4.1g	Institution has incentive system (for example, a system of professional development plans tied to institutional goals for student success) that encourages faculty and staff to work together to improve student outcomes and to use data to guide the process.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
4.1h	Institution uses external grant funds strategically to support systemic efforts to improve outcomes for all students, not just for isolated projects that benefit small numbers of students.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
4.1i	Institution actively seeks to scale up and sustain pilot programs or practices that prove effective.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Indicator 4.2. Organization

		Extent of Implementation: Little or None 1	2	3	4	A lot 5
4.2a	Administrative structure and staffing promotes cross-divisional focus and action on improving student outcomes.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
4.2b	Committee structure promotes cross-divisional focus and action on improving student outcomes.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
4.2c	Committees concerned with student success include representatives from key stakeholders, such as faculty, student services staff, administrators and students.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
4.2d	Committees concerned with student success rely on data for decision making.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Indicator 4.3. Hiring and professional development

		Extent of Implementation: Little or None 1	2	3	4	A lot 5
4.3a	Institution considers commitment to student success as a key criterion in all hiring decisions.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
4.3b	Institution encourages and supports professional development for faculty and staff to help them become more effective in facilitating student success.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
4.3c	Faculty and staff on a wide scale participate in seminars, workshops, and conferences related to improving student success.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
4.3d	Institution provides training to faculty and staff on using data and research to improve programs and services.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Appendix B

Mean Institutional Rates for Achieving the Dream Performance Measures

Appendix Table B.1

Average Institutional Rates on Achieving the Dream Performance Indicators at Pennsylvania Colleges (Round 3)
Fall 2004 Cohort, Three-Year Outcomes

	Mean Value (%)	Standard Deviation (%)[a]	Minimum Value (%)[b]	Maximum Value (%)[c]	Number of Institutions Reporting
Developmental courses[d]					
Successful completion of highest-level developmental math course	36.6	14.5	7.1	51.3	7
Successful completion of highest-level developmental English course	44.7	16.4	12.0	61.3	7
Successful completion of highest-level developmental reading course	34.0	20.5	5.0	63.8	7
Gatekeeper courses					
Successful completion of gatekeeper math course[e]	27.8	12.3	1.0	50.7	7
Percent referred who enroll in gatekeeper math[f]	27.4	14.9	1.0	50.7	7
Percent referred who complete gatekeeper math[f]	21.7	11.9	2.8	42.4	7
Successful completion of gatekeeper English course[g]	46.1	5.3	38.6	54.5	7
Percent referred who enroll in gatekeeper English[h]	45.1	13.8	27.2	64.6	7
Percent referred who complete gatekeeper English[h]	41.1	11.4	21.4	57.6	7
Course completion					
Ratio of completed credits to attempted credits	76.4	13.3	58.9	93.7	7

Appendix Table B.1 (continued)

	Mean Value (%)	Standard Deviation (%)[a]	Minimum Value (%)[b]	Maximum Value (%)[c]	Number of Institutions Reporting
Persistence					
Enrolled in the first semester after the initial term of enrollment or completed within first year[i]	70.1	4.6	62.0	77.3	7
Enrolled in at least one semester in the second year or completed within two years[j]	52.8	4.0	47.9	58.6	7
Enrolled in at least one semester in each of the first three years or completed within 3 years[k]	30.3	2.7	26.5	33.5	7
Completions					
Completed within 3 years	10.4	5.1	4.5	19.9	7
Obtained an associate degree within 3 years	9.1	5.0	4.4	19.0	7
Obtained a certificate or diploma within 3 years	1.5	1.0	0.1	2.5	7
Enrolled in at least one semester in the third year	31.2	1.8	27.4	32.6	7

SOURCE: CCRC calculations using the Achieving the Dream database.

NOTES: Calculations for this table use all available data for sample members in the fall 2004 cohort at Pennsylvania Achieving the Dream colleges, which includes 21,501 students at seven community colleges. Figures represent average institutional rates.

Delaware County Community College notes:

- Delaware has a policy in which students who have test scores that are "below minimum entry" do not qualify for the lowest level of remediation; there is no course designed for these students.
- Most ESL students take a separate ESL exam to place into ESL classes.

Appendix Table B.1 (continued)

Montgomery County Community College notes:

- Anyone who attempts and/or completes any developmental courses does not receive college credit.
- System "wipes out" credits attempted if a student withdrawals from a college-level course.

[a]The standard deviation is a calculated variable measure of the dispersion of values around the mean.

[b]The minimum value is the lowest rate calculated among institutions reporting data.

[c]The maximum value is the highest rate calculated among institutions reporting data.

[d]Grades of C or better must be earned to have completed a course successfully.

[e]The gatekeeper math course is the first college-level math course at the college. Grades of C or better must be earned to have completed a course successfully.

[f]"Percent referred" is the percentage of students who were referred to developmental instruction in math.

[g]The gatekeeper English course is the first college-level English course at the college. Grades of C or better must be earned to have completed a course successfully.

[h]"Percent referred" is the percentage of students who were referred to developmental instruction in English.

[i]The initial term of enrollment is fall 2004. The first term after the initial term is spring 2005.

[j]For the fall 2004 cohort, the second year is academic year 2005-2006.

[k]For the fall 2004 cohort, the third year is academic year 2006-2007.

Appendix Table B.2

Average Institutional Rates on Achieving the Dream Performance Indicators at Washington Colleges (Round 3) Fall 2004 Cohort, Three-Year Outcomes

	Mean Value (%)	Standard Deviation (%)[a]	Minimum Value (%)[b]	Maximum Value (%)[c]	Number of Institutions Reporting
Developmental courses[d]					
Successful completion of highest-level developmental math course	26.9	3.9	21.6	31.4	5
Successful completion of highest-level developmental English course	41.0	7.6	32.8	49.0	5
Successful completion of highest-level developmental reading course	19.8	19.5	0.4	43.8	5
Gatekeeper courses					
Successful completion of gatekeeper math course[e]	27.2	9.6	18.7	43.1	6
Percent referred who enroll in gatekeeper math[f]	28.3	11.1	20.0	48.8	6
Percent referred who complete gatekeeper math[f]	25.4	10.3	18.4	44.8	6
Successful completion of gatekeeper English course[g]	41.5	14.4	17.3	58.1	6
Percent referred who enroll in gatekeeper English[h]	38.5	14.9	10.5	49.8	6
Percent referred who complete gatekeeper English[h]	34.1	13.2	9.2	44.8	6
Course completion					
Ratio of completed credits to attempted credits	78.9	4.5	75.0	87.9	6

Appendix Table B.2 (continued)

	Mean Value (%)	Standard Deviation (%)[a]	Minimum Value (%)[b]	Maximum Value (%)[c]	Number of Institutions Reporting
Persistence					
Enrolled in the first semester after the initial term of enrollment or completed within first year[i]	73.5	20.5	32.2	88.6	6
Enrolled in at least one semester in the second year or completed within two years[j]	57.6	6.9	48.8	68.6	6
Enrolled in at least one semester in each of the first three years or completed within 3 years[k]	40.2	9.9	30.8	58.6	6
Completions					
Completed within 3 years	27.2	15.4	13.5	56.5	6
Obtained an associate degree within 3 years	15.9	5.2	9.0	21.9	6
Obtained a certificate or diploma within 3 years	11.0	19.6	1.4	50.9	6
Enrolled in at least one semester in the third year	21.0	9.0	4.1	28.7	6

SOURCE: CCRC calculations using the Achieving the Dream database.

NOTES: Calculations for this table use all available data for sample members in the fall 2004 cohort at Washington Achieving the Dream colleges, which includes 4,086 students at six community colleges. Figures represent average institutional rates.

Renton Technical College notes:

- Since Renton is a technical college, they have a problem coding credits (i.e. distinguishing attempted from earned). For the present, they decided to use their "credits enrolled" field as "credits attempted."
- Renton does not have the ability to match scores to "college level" because they are a technical college.
- Remedial classes are taught in courses offered by Basic Studies department, but not as distinct remedial courses.

Big Bend Community College does not have a referral system. They have assumed the student is referred to the level they placed.

Appendix Table B.2 (continued)

Seattle Community College – Central Campus does not offer a developmental reading course. Developmental English is strictly a writing program.

Yakima Valley Community College notes:

- Yakima has a placement policy that dictates the student take the class they place into; therefore, their placement is the referral.
- For students that were awarded more than one award, they selected the highest precedent first and then if there were duplicates, selected the last recorded award with associated CipCode.

[a]The standard deviation is a calculated variable measure of the dispersion of values around the mean.

[b]The minimum value is the lowest rate calculated among institutions reporting data.

[c]The maximum value is the highest rate calculated among institutions reporting data.

[d]Renton Technical College does not have a remediation system below Level 1 (one level below college). As such, only five community colleges are evaluated in the "Developmental Courses" section. Grades of C or better must be earned to have completed a course successfully.

[e]The gatekeeper math course is the first college-level math course at the college. Grades of C or better must be earned to have completed a course successfully.

[f]"Percent referred" is the percentage of students who were referred to developmental instruction in math.

[g]The gatekeeper English course is the first college-level English course at the college. Grades of C or better must be earned to have completed a course successfully.

[h]"Percent referred" is the percentage of students who were referred to developmental instruction in English.

[i]The initial term of enrollment is fall 2004. The first term after the initial term is spring 2005.

[j]For the fall 2004 cohort, the second year is academic year 2005-2006.

[k]For the fall 2004 cohort, the third year is academic year 2006-2007.

Appendix Table B.3

Average Institutional Rates on Achieving the Dream Performance Indicators at Pennsylvania, Washington, and Round 1 Colleges, Fall 2004 Cohort, Three-Year Outcomes

	Mean Value (%)			Standard Deviation (%)[a]			Minimum Value (%)[b]			Maximum Value (%)[c]			Number of Institutions Reporting		
	PA	WA	Rd 1	PA	WA	Rd 1	PA	WA	Rd 1	PA	WA	Rd 1	PA	WA	Rd 1
Developmental courses[d]															
Successful completion of highest-level developmental math course	36.6	26.9	28.9	14.5	3.9	12	7.1	21.6	5.7	51.3	31.4	48.9	7	5	22
Successful completion of highest-level developmental English course	44.7	41.0	35.7	16.4	7.6	16.5	12.0	32.8	5.1	61.3	49.0	68.0	7	5	22
Successful completion of highest-level developmental reading course	34	19.8	37.0	20.5	19.5	17.5	5.0	0.4	4.7	63.8	43.8	66.6	7	5	23
Gatekeeper courses															
Successful completion of gatekeeper math course[e]	27.8	27.2	20.5	12.3	9.6	7.9	1.0	18.7	6.8	50.7	43.1	32.9	7	6	22
Percent referred who enroll in gatekeeper math[f]	27.4	28.3		14.9	11.1		1.0	20.0		50.7	48.8		7	6	
Percent referred who complete gatekeeper math[f]	21.7	25.4		11.9	10.3		2.8	18.4		42.4	44.8		7	6	
Successful completion of gatekeeper English course[g]	46.1	41.5	30.1	5.3	14.4	8.6	38.6	17.3	15.6	54.5	58.1	46.0	7	6	23

Appendix Table B.3 (continued)

	Mean Value (%)			Standard Deviation (%)[a]			Minimum Value (%)[b]			Maximum Value (%)[c]			Number of Institutions Reporting		
	PA	WA	Rd 1	PA	WA	Rd 1	PA	WA	Rd 1	PA	WA	Rd 1	PA	WA	Rd 1
Gatekeeper courses (continued)															
Percent referred who enroll in gatekeeper English[h]	45.1	38.5		13.8	14.9		27.2	10.5		64.6	49.8		7	6	
Percent referred who complete gatekeeper English[h]	41.1	34.1		11.4	13.2		21.4	9.2		57.6	44.8		7	6	
Course completion															
Ratio of completed credits to attempted credits	76.4	78.9	70.1	13.3	4.5	9.5	58.9	75.0	51.9	93.7	87.9	92.3	7	6	29
Persistence															
Enrolled in the first semester after the initial term of enrollment or completed within first year[i]	70.1	73.5	72.4	4.6	20.5	5.4	62.0	32.2	56.3	77.3	88.6	81.3	7	6	29
Enrolled in at least 1 semester in the second year or completed within 2 years[j]	52.8	57.6	54.4	4.0	6.9	6.4	47.9	48.8	40.6	58.6	68.6	66.6	7	6	29
Enrolled in at least 1 semester in each of the 1st 3 years or completed within 3 years[k]	30.3	40.2	33.3	2.7	9.9	7.6	26.5	30.8	17.2	33.5	58.6	46.1	7	6	29
Completions															
Completed within 3 years	10.4	27.2	10.8	5.1	15.4	6.8	4.5	13.5	1.6	19.9	56.5	27.6	7	6	28
Obtained an associate degree within 3 years	9.1	15.9	7.3	5.0	5.2	4.6	4.4	9.0	0.9	19.0	21.9	19.1	7	6	28
Obtained a certificate or diploma within 3 years	1.5	11.0	3.5	1.0	19.6	3.6	0.1	1.4	0.4	2.5	50.9	16.3	7	6	28
Enrolled in at least one semester in the third year	31.2	21.0	28.7	1.8	9.0	6.4	27.4	4.1	14.3	32.6	28.7	43.8	7	6	28

Appendix Table B.3 (continued)

SOURCE: CCRC calculations using the Achieving the Dream database.

NOTES: Calculations for this table use all available data for sample members in the fall 2004 cohort at Pennsylvania and Washington Achieving the Dream colleges, which includes 25,587 students at 13 community colleges, and sample members in the fall 2002 cohort at Round 1 Achieving the Dream colleges, which includes 66,129 students at 29 colleges. Figures represent average institutional rates. Some colleges did not report into the database on some measures.

[a]The standard deviation is a calculated variable measure of the dispersion of values around the mean.
[b]The minimum value is the lowest rate calculated among institutions reporting data.
[c]The maximum value is the highest rate calculated among institutions reporting data.
[d]Grades of C or better must be earned to have completed a course successfully.
[e]The gatekeeper math course is the first college-level math course at the college. Grades of C or better must be earned to have completed a course successfully.
[f]"Percent referred" is the percentage of students who were referred to developmental instruction in math. These measures were not included in the baseline data for Round 1 Achieving the Dream colleges.
[g]The gatekeeper English course is the first college-level English course at the college. Grades of C or better must be earned to have completed a course successfully.
[h]"Percent referred" is the percentage of students who were referred to developmental instruction in English. These measures were not included in the baseline data for Round 1 Achieving the Dream colleges.
[i]The initial term of enrollment is fall 2004. The first term after the initial term is spring 2005.
[j]For the fall 2004 cohort, the second year is academic year 2005-2006.
[k]For the fall 2004 cohort, the third year is academic year 2006-2007.

Appendix Table B.4

Average Institutional Rates on Achieving the Dream Performance Indicators at Pennsylvania and Washington Colleges (Round 3), by Race/Ethnicity,[a] Fall 2004 Cohort, Three-Year Outcomes

	White, Non-Hispanic		Asian, Pacific Islander		Black, Non-Hispanic		Hispanic		Native American	
	PA	WA	PA	WA	PA	WA	PA	WA	PA	WA
Developmental courses[b]										
Successful completion of highest-level developmental math course	39.2	27.7	43.1	28.8	29.7	23.1	29.6	22.2	31.6	27.4
Successful completion of highest-level developmental English course	47.6	36.7	42.2	40.2	41.9	37.0	37.3	50.2	36.6	34.7
Successful completion of highest-level developmental reading course	33.2	20.6	32.2	15.3	33.2	20.9	28.4	25.4	14.1	42.9
Gatekeeper courses										
Successful completion of gatekeeper math course[c]	29.5	27.7	29.1	31.7	18.9	21.5	24.0	22.2	24.8	26.4
Percent referred who enroll in gatekeeper math[d]	28.9	29.6	28.0	28.7	25.0	24.7	25.5	20.2	31.3	22.7
Percent referred who complete gatekeeper math[d]	22.9	26.3	22.8	26.8	18.3	22.9	20.7	17.4	31.3	20.4
Successful completion of gatekeeper English course[e]	49.1	35.8	40.2	46.9	39.0	44.4	37.0	36.3	39.2	39.7
Percent referred who enroll in gatekeeper English[f]	47.7	37.5	43.9	38.3	40.7	27.6	39.2	47.6	32.5	41.7
Percent referred who complete gatekeeper English[f]	44.5	34.1	37.6	32.3	35.1	25.5	33.0	37.0	25.9	29.9

Appendix Table B.4 (continued)

	White, Non-Hispanic		Asian, Pacific Islander		Black, Non-Hispanic		Hispanic		Native American	
	PA	WA	PA	WA	PA	WA	PA	WA	PA	WA
Course completion										
Ratio of completed credits to attempted credits	78.8	80.3	75.9	83.7	67.9	69.3	74.6	73.1	67.1	75.7
Persistence										
Enrolled in the first semester after the initial term of enrollment or completed within first year[g]	71.2	82.3	68.0	86.3	64.9	78.2	67.1	75.5	55.3	72.0
Enrolled in at least one semester in the second year or completed within two years[h]	54.1	58.3	53.8	63.3	45.2	46.5	48.3	50.1	44.7	58.5
Enrolled in at least one semester in each of the first three years or completed within 3 years[i]	31.7	40.7	33.6	47.4	23.2	30.5	26.2	32.5	28.5	37.9
Completions										
Completed within 3 years	11.7	29.2	8.7	31.1	5.1	14.9	8.8	22.4	1.2	24.1
Obtained an associate degree within 3 years	10.3	17.5	6.6	19.0	4.1	7.8	7.6	12.6	1.2	13.8
Obtained a certificate or diploma within 3 years	1.6	11.5	2.2	13.5	0.9	7.5	1.2	9.1	0.0	10.3
Enrolled in at least one semester in the third year	31.9	19.7	35.6	21.6	26.5	18.2	28.8	20.3	38.1	18.5

SOURCE: CCRC calculations using the Achieving the Dream database.

NOTES: Calculations for this table use all available data for sample members in the fall 2004 cohort at Pennsylvania and Washington Achieving the Dream colleges, which includes 25,587 students at 13 community colleges. Figures represent average institutional rates. Cases where a particular racial/ethnic group for the institution's cohort sample had observations of five or less were censored.

Appendix Table B.4 (continued)

[a]The racial/ethnic category "Other" was excluded from the analysis. This group includes those 1,227 students identified as "Multiracial," "Nonresident alien," "Other," or "Unknown."

[b]Grades of C or better must be earned to have completed a course successfully.

[c]The gatekeeper math course is the first college-level math course at the college. Grades of C or better must be earned to have completed a course successfully.

[d]"Percent referred" is the percentage of students who were referred to developmental instruction in math.

[e]The gatekeeper English course is the first college-level English course at the college. Grades of C or better must be earned to have completed a course successfully.

[f]"Percent referred" is the percentage of students who were referred to developmental instruction in English.

[g]The initial term of enrollment is fall 2004. The first term after the initial term is spring 2005.

[h]For the fall 2004 cohort, the second year is academic year 2005-2006.

[i]For the fall 2004 cohort, the third year is academic year 2006-2007.

Appendix Table B.5

Average Institutional Rates on Achieving the Dream Performance Indicators at Pennsylvania and Washington Colleges (Round 3), by Race/Ethnicity[a] Among Female Students, Fall 2004 Cohort, Three-Year Outcomes

	White, Non-Hispanic Females		Asian, Pacific Islander Females		Black, Non-Hispanic Females		Hispanic Females		Native American Females	
	PA	WA	PA	WA	PA	WA	PA	WA	PA	WA
Developmental courses[b]										
Successful completion of highest-level developmental math course	40.7	29.3	42.3	33.7	32.2	26.2	29.6	20.4	45.0	22.9
Successful completion of highest-level developmental English course	50.1	36.9	40.6	54.0	48.7	23.8	42.3	42.7	47.2	16.7
Successful completion of highest-level developmental reading course	35.2	22.1	33.5	14.3	34.3	22.8	32.2	22.5	22.2	50.0
Gatekeeper courses										
Successful completion of gatekeeper math course[c]	28.6	28.1	27.2	32.1	17.0	24.0	25.5	16.4	19.7	15.6
Percent referred who enroll in gatekeeper math[d]	28.6	29.3	26.6	35.4	21.7	28.6	25.2	18.5	40.0	22.9
Percent referred who complete gatekeeper math[d]	22.8	26.7	23.6	33.5	14.8	25.5	20.7	16.8	40.0	19.8
Successful completion of gatekeeper English course[e]	51.4	46.0	37.5	49.0	42.5	47.7	43.2	36.6	24.8	45.2
Percent referred who enroll in gatekeeper English[f]	49.7	36.6	40.9	51.0	43.4	23.8	41.9	35.8	42.2	33.3
Percent referred who complete gatekeeper English[f]	47.1	33.5	36.1	41.1	37.8	19.6	39.2	31.7	31.7	33.3

Appendix Table B.5 (continued)

	White, Non-Hispanic Females		Asian, Pacific Islander Females		Black, Non-Hispanic Females		Hispanic Females		Native American Females	
	PA	WA	PA	WA	PA	WA	PA	WA	PA	WA
Course completion										
Ratio of completed credits to attempted credits	80.5	81.5	78.7	87.1	69.1	72.2	72.7	70.3	54.9	81.2
Persistence										
Enrolled in the first semester after the initial term of enrollment or completed within first year[g]	73.4	83.0	67.6	82.2	63.9	80.8	68.6	72.2	54.9	65.9
Enrolled in at least one semester in the second year or completed within two years[h]	55.2	58.7	55.6	61.8	48.3	52.3	47.4	44.9	41.5	55.5
Enrolled in at least one semester in each of the first three years or completed within 3 years[i]	34.5	43.1	35.4	48.3	27.6	34.0	28.4	27.8	18.1	36.8
Completions										
Completed within 3 years	13.2	31.9	10.2	35.4	6.2	15.8	10.1	16.2	1.6	22.2
Obtained an associate degree within 3 years	11.5	17.4	7.5	19.8	5.2	7.1	8.8	9.7	1.6	18.6
Obtained a certificate or diploma within 3 years	1.9	14.2	2.6	16.8	1.0	8.8	1.4	4.0	0.0	3.6
Enrolled in at least one semester in the third year	33.8	19.4	35.6	20.8	30.5	21.6	30.0	21.4	28.0	22.3

SOURCE: CCRC calculations using the Achieving the Dream database.

NOTES: Calculations for this table use all available data for sample members in the fall 2004 cohort at Pennsylvania and Washington Achieving the Dream colleges, which includes 14,320 students at 13 community colleges. Figures represent average institutional rates. Cases where a particular racial/ethnic group for the institution's cohort sample had observations of five or less were censored.

Appendix Table B.5 (continued)

[a]The racial/ethnic category "Other" was excluded from the analysis. This group includes those 1,227 students identified as "Multiracial," "Nonresident alien," "Other," or "Unknown."

[b]Grades of C or better must be earned to have completed a course successfully.

[c]The gatekeeper math course is the first college-level math course at the college. Grades of C or better must be earned to have completed a course successfully.

[d]"Percent referred" is the percentage of students who were referred to developmental instruction in math.

[e]The gatekeeper English course is the first college-level English course at the college. Grades of C or better must be earned to have completed a course successfully.

[f]"Percent referred" is the percentage of students who were referred to developmental instruction in English.

[g]The initial term of enrollment is fall 2004. The first term after the initial term is spring 2005.

[h]For the fall 2004 cohort, the second year is academic year 2005-2006.

[i]For the fall 2004 cohort, the third year is academic year 2006-2007.

Appendix Table B.6

Average Institutional Rates on Achieving the Dream Performance Indicators at Pennsylvania and Washington Colleges (Round 3), by Race/Ethnicity[a] Among Male Students, Fall 2004 Cohort, Three-Year Outcomes

	White, Non-Hispanic Males		Asian, Pacific Islander Males		Black, Non-Hispanic Males		Hispanic Males		Native American Males	
	PA	WA	PA	WA	PA	WA	PA	WA	PA	WA
Developmental courses[b]										
Successful completion of highest-level developmental math course	36.9	25.7	45.7	34.0	26.8	24.2	29.7	23.5	50.0	14.3
Successful completion of highest-level developmental English course	44.9	37.1	44.7	54.6	43.6	44.6	31.2	46.2	60.0	
Successful completion of highest-level developmental reading course	30.8	14.2	31.5	16.8	33.4	17.8	13.7	16.7	25.0	
Gatekeeper courses										
Successful completion of gatekeeper math course[c]	30.5	27.3	31.4	30.2	21.6	21.3	20.0	20.2	32.4	0.0
Percent referred who enroll in gatekeeper math[d]	29.2	30.0	31.5	36.7	27.7	20.8	17.2	21.7	50.0	0.0
Percent referred who complete gatekeeper math[d]	22.9	26.0	23.1	33.8	21.3	19.1	9.5	17.8	50.0	0.0
Successful completion of gatekeeper English course[e]	46.5	50.5	44.4	45.1	34.1	39.3	40.2	35.4	43.6	12.5
Percent referred who enroll in gatekeeper English[f]	45.8	38.1	48.3	45.7	36.4	41.3	34.8	37.5	50.0	
Percent referred who complete gatekeeper English[f]	41.8	36.1	42.2	42.5	28.9	40.1	22.1	28.4	50.0	
Course completion										
Ratio of completed credits to attempted credits	76.5	78.6	72.2	80.7	66.1	66.5	64.9	70.3	75.9	60.4

Appendix Table B.6 (continued)

	White, Non-Hispanic Males		Asian, Pacific Islander Males		Black, Non-Hispanic Males		Hispanic Males		Native American Males	
	PA	WA	PA	WA	PA	WA	PA	WA	PA	WA
Persistence										
Enrolled in the first semester after the initial term of enrollment or completed within first year[g]	68.7	81.6	68.7	89.0	66.2	80.1	62.2	81.2	59.7	70.8
Enrolled in at least one semester in the second year or completed within two years[h]	52.8	57.8	51.3	64.8	40.6	45.5	45.4	55.4	47.8	37.5
Enrolled in at least one semester in each of the first three years or completed within 3 years[i]	28.4	37.9	31.8	46.8	16.7	26.1	21.9	29.5	37.8	31.3
Completions										
Completed within 3 years	9.9	26.0	6.9	30.2	3.5	12.9	4.0	14.9	1.7	4.2
Obtained an associate degree within 3 years	8.9	17.4	5.4	19.3	2.6	4.7	2.0	12.5	16.7	0.0
Obtained a certificate or diploma within 3 years	1.1	8.5	1.5	11.0	0.8	9.4	2.1	1.5	0.0	4.2
Enrolled in at least one semester in the third year	29.7	20.1	36.0	21.7	20.7	16.0	27.7	27.8	48.6	31.3

SOURCE: CCRC calculations using the Achieving the Dream database.

NOTES: Calculations for this table use all available data for sample members in the fall 2004 cohort at Pennsylvania and Washington Achieving the Dream colleges, which includes 11,094 students at 13 community colleges. Figures represent average institutional rates. Cases where a particular racial/ethnic group for the institution's cohort sample had observations of five or less were censored.

Appendix Table B.6 (continued)

[a]The racial/ethnic category "Other" was excluded from the analysis. This group includes those 1,227 students identified as "Multiracial," "Nonresident alien," "Other," or "Unknown."

[b]Grades of C or better must be earned to have completed a course successfully.

[c]The gatekeeper math course is the first college-level math course at the college. Grades of C or better must be earned to have completed a course successfully.

[d]"Percent referred" is the percentage of students who were referred to developmental instruction in math.

[e]The gatekeeper English course is the first college-level English course at the college. Grades of C or better must be earned to have completed a course successfully.

[f]"Percent referred" is the percentage of students who were referred to developmental instruction in English.

[g]The initial term of enrollment is fall 2004. The first term after the initial term is spring 2005.

[h]For the fall 2004 cohort, the second year is academic year 2005-2006.

[i]For the fall 2004 cohort, the third year is academic year 2006-2007.

Appendix Table B.7

Average Institutional Rates on Achieving the Dream Performance Indicators at Pennsylvania and Washington Colleges (Round 3), by Pell Grant Receipt Status,[a] Fall 2004 Cohort, Three-Year Outcomes

	PA Pell Recipient	PA Pell Nonrecipient	WA Pell Recipient	WA Pell Nonrecipient
Developmental courses[b]				
Successful completion of highest-level developmental math course	44.3	33.8	31.9	24.7
Successful completion of highest-level developmental English course	54.5	40.8	47.3	36.9
Successful completion of highest-level developmental reading course	42.0	30.0	21.3	18.8
Gatekeeper courses				
Successful completion of gatekeeper math course[c]	32.7	26.0	28.8	26.4
Percent referred who enroll in gatekeeper math[d]	33.1	25.1	31.0	26.9
Percent referred who complete gatekeeper math[d]	25.6	20.4	28.8	23.6
Successful completion of gatekeeper English course[e]	58.7	41.4	51.5	44.1
Percent referred who enroll in gatekeeper English[f]	54.6	42.0	43.9	35.0
Percent referred who complete gatekeeper English[f]	49.6	38.4	39.0	30.8
Course completion				
Ratio of completed credits to attempted credits	75.0	76.8	78.7	79.3

Appendix Table B.7 (continued)

	PA Pell Recipient	PA Pell Nonrecipient	WA Pell Recipient	WA Pell Nonrecipient
Persistence				
Enrolled in the first semester after the initial term of enrollment or completed within first year[g]	83.0	65.1	87.6	75.8
Enrolled in at least one semester in the second year or completed within two years[h]	66.1	46.4	52.1	44.8
Enrolled in at least one semester in each of the first three years or completed within 3 years[i]	36.5	21.1	24.5	14.9
Completions				
Completed within 3 years	12.1	9.7	28.8	26.6
Obtained an associate degree within 3 years	10.9	8.4	16.4	15.6
Obtained a certificate or diploma within 3 years	1.4	1.5	11.6	10.8
Enrolled in at least one semester in the third year	43.2	26.9	27.9	17.7

SOURCE: CCRC calculations using the Achieving the Dream database.

NOTES: Calculations for this table use all available data for sample members in the fall 2004 cohort at Pennsylvania and Washington Achieving the Dream colleges, which includes 25,587 students at 13 community colleges. Figures represent average institutional rates.

Appendix Table B.7 (continued)

[a]Pell Grant status was determined by receipt in any term in the three years.

[b]Grades of C or better must be earned to have completed a course successfully.

[c]The gatekeeper math course is the first college-level math course at the college. Grades of C or better must be earned to have completed a course successfully.

[d]"Percent referred" is the percentage of students who were referred to developmental instruction in math.

[e]The gatekeeper English course is the first college-level English course at the college. Grades of C or better must be earned to have completed a course successfully.

[f]"Percent referred" is the percentage of students who were referred to developmental instruction in English.

[g]The initial term of enrollment is fall 2004. The first term after the initial term is spring 2005.

[h]For the fall 2004 cohort, the second year is academic year 2005-2006.

[i]For the fall 2004 cohort, the third year is academic year 2006-2007.

Appendix Table B.8

Average Institutional Rates on Achieving the Dream Performance Indicators at Pennsylvania and Washington Colleges (Round 3), by Developmental Instruction Referral Status, Fall 2004 Cohort, Three-Year Outcomes

	PA Referred	PA Not Referred	WA Referred	WA Not Referred
Gatekeeper courses				
Successful completion of gatekeeper math course[a]	27.7	30.6	24.5	39.2
Percent referred who enroll in gatekeeper math[b]	27.4	n/a	26.5	n/a
Percent referred who complete gatekeeper math[b]	21.7	n/a	23.8	n/a
Successful completion of gatekeeper English course[c]	49.4	44.7	53.1	46.0
Percent referred who enroll in gatekeeper English[d]	45.1	n/a	51.7	n/a
Percent referred who complete gatekeeper English[d]	41.1	n/a	46.1	n/a
Course completion				
Ratio of completed credits to attempted credits	73.0	82.2	76.0	81.8

Appendix Table B.8 (continued)

	PA Referred	PA Not Referred	WA Referred	WA Not Referred
Persistence				
Enrolled in the first semester after the initial term of enrollment or completed within first year[e]	72.1	67.1	80.6	82.4
Enrolled in at least one semester in the second year or completed within two years[f]	53.4	49.7	54.0	49.2
Enrolled in at least one semester in each of the first three years or completed within 3 years[g]	27.8	22.2	25.4	15.3
Completions				
Completed within 3 years	8.7	13.4	18.4	32.2
Obtained an associate degree within 3 years	7.4	12.0	14.7	20.1
Obtained a certificate or diploma within 3 years	1.4	1.6	2.3	12.2
Enrolled in at least one semester in the third year	33.2	29.1	29.2	18.7

SOURCE: CCRC calculations using the Achieving the Dream database.

NOTES: Calculations for this table use all available data for sample members in the fall 2004 cohort at Pennsylvania and Washington Achieving the Dream colleges, which includes 25,587 students at 13 community colleges. Figures represent average institutional rates.

Appendix Table B.8 (continued)

[a]The gatekeeper math course is the first college-level math course at the college. Grades of C or better must be earned to have completed a course successfully.

[b]"Percent referred" is the percentage of students who were referred to developmental instruction in math. The columns in the table for "Pennsylvania Not Referred" and "Washington Not Referred" are not applicable to the "Percent referred" measure.

[c]The gatekeeper English course is the first college-level English course at the college. Grades of C or better must be earned to have completed a course successfully.

[d]"Percent referred" is the percentage of students who were referred to developmental instruction in English. The columns in the table for "Pennsylvania Not Referred" and "Washington Not Referred" are not applicable to the "Percent referred" measure.

[e]The initial term of enrollment is fall 2004. The first term after the initial term is spring 2005.

[f]For the fall 2004 cohort, the second year is academic year 2005-2006.

[g]For the fall 2004 cohort, the third year is academic year 2006-2007.

Appendix C

Achieving the Dream Colleges in Pennsylvania and Washington:

Progress Toward Implementing Achieving the Dream Institutional Effectiveness Principles

Table C.1

Achieving the Dream Colleges in Pennsylvania: Progress Toward Implementing Achieving the Dream Institutional Effectiveness Principles

Rating Scale

Extent to which a college implemented or developed practices that reflect the given principle:

Little or None		**Developing**		**A Lot**
1	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**

Principle	**PA-7**	**PA -6**	**PA-5**	**PA-4**	**PA-3**	**PA-2**	**PA-1**
1. Committed Leadership							
Vision and values: College leaders actively support focus on student outcomes, not just enrollments	4	4	5	5	5	5	5

Principle	PA-7	PA -6	PA-5	PA-4	PA-3	PA-2	PA-1
Equity: Leaders committed to achieving equity in outcomes across race/income groups	3	3	2	2	3	3	3
Commitment: Leadership willing to change policy and procedures, make investments to improve student success	2	2	4	4	5	5	5
2. Use of Evidence to Improve Policies, Programs and Services							
IT capacity: IT capacity adequate to meet demand for data and IR	5	4	2	3	4	4	4
IR capacity: IR staff capacity adequate to meet demand	5	4	2	3	4	5	5
Process for identifying achievement gaps: College has an established process	3	4	4	4	4	4	5

Principle	PA-7	PA -6	PA-5	PA-4	PA-3	PA-2	PA-1
Process for diagnosing gaps and formulating solutions: College has an established process	2	3	4	4	4	4	5
Process for evaluating solutions: College has an established process	2	3	3	2	3	4	5
3. Broad Engagement							
Faculty: Faculty actively involved in developing and assessing efforts to improve student success	2	2	2	3	4	4	5
Student services staff: Faculty actively involved in developing and assessing efforts to improve student success	2	2	2	3	3	4	5
Collaboration: Faculty and student services staff work together to improve student success	2	2	2	3	3	4	4
Students: Students actively participate in efforts to improve student success	2	3	2	3	2	3	3

Principle	PA-7	PA -6	PA-5	PA-4	PA-3	PA-2	PA-1
External stakeholders: Colleges secure input from external stakeholders on efforts to improve student success	3	1	3	2	3	2	2
4. Systemic Institutional Improvement							
Institutional management: Program review, planning, and budgeting decisions driven by evidence on what works to improve student success	2	2	3	3	4	5	5
Organization: College has committee or body responsible for overseeing student success efforts	2	2	4	4	3	5	5
Professional development: Professional development for faculty and staff reinforce student success efforts	3	3	4	3	3	3	4

Table C.2

Achieving the Dream Colleges in Washington State: Progress toward Implementing Achieving the Dream Institutional Effectiveness Principles

Rating Scale

Extent to which a college implemented or developed practices that reflect the given principle:

Little or None		Developing		A Lot
1	2	3	4	5

Principle	WA-6	WA-5	WA-4	WA-3	WA-2	WA-1
1. Committed Leadership						
***Vision and values**:* College leaders actively support focus on student outcomes, not just enrollments	3	3	4	4	5	5
Equity: Leaders committed to achieving equity in outcomes across race/income groups	3	2	3	3	3	5
Commitment: Leadership willing to change policy and procedures, make investments to improve student success	2	3	4	4	4	5

Principle	WA-6	WA-5	WA-4	WA-3	WA-2	WA-1
2. Use of Evidence to Improve Policies, Programs and Services						
IT capacity: IT capacity adequate to meet demand for data and IR	2	2	2	2	2	2
IR capacity: IR staff capacity adequate to meet demand	3	3	3	3	4	4
Process for identifying achievement gaps: College has an established process	2	3	4	4	5	4
Process for diagnosing gaps and formulating solutions: College has an established process	2	3	3	3	5	4
Process for evaluating solutions: College has an established process	1	3	2	3	5	5
3. Broad Engagement						
Faculty: Faculty actively involved in developing and assessing efforts to improve student success	2	3	2	3	4	5
Student services staff: Faculty actively involved in developing and assessing efforts to improve student success	2	3	2	3	4	5

Principle	WA-6	WA-5	WA-4	WA-3	WA-2	WA-1
Collaboration: Faculty and student services staff work together to improve student success	2	2	2	3	4	5
Students: Students actively participate in efforts to improve student success	3	2	2	2	4	4
External stakeholders: Colleges secure input from external stakeholders on efforts to improve student success	2	2	2	2	2	4
4. Systemic Institutional Improvement						
Institutional management: Program review, planning, and budgeting decisions driven by evidence on what works to improve student success	2	2	2	2	3	4
Organization: College has committee or body responsible for overseeing student success efforts	3	3	2	4	4	5
Professional development: Professional development for faculty and staff reinforce student success efforts	3	3	3	3	3	3

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