

**Achieving the Dream**  
**KEY MESSAGES AND PROCESSES**  
**2014**

**What is Achieving the Dream (ATD) and why is it important?**

- A large, growing, 10-year old, national reform network helping more community college students succeed
- The most comprehensive, non-governmental reform movement for student success in higher education history
- Student-centered, based on evidence, and committed to excellence and equity
- Over 200 colleges, 15 state policy teams, more than 100 coaches and advisors, and more than 20 investors
- Focused on achievement gaps and operational barriers to success in order to make appropriate changes
- Leads to improved skills, better employability, and economic growth

**How is ATD helping to transform institutions?**

This is not work done “on the margins” or as a project. ATD addresses fundamental change in how colleges do business and make decisions.

Five principles

- Leadership committed to improving success, not just access
- Use of evidence (data) to make improvements and evaluate results
- Broad stakeholder engagement with shared responsibility for student success
- Systemic institutional improvement (e.g., planning/budgeting, revisions to policies and practices, professional development, evaluation)
- Commitment to improving equity while improving outcomes for all students

Five-step improvement model

- Leadership commits to improving student outcomes and communicates this.
- Faculty and staff review and discuss data, policies, and practices to identify priorities.
- Multiple stakeholders are involved in the work (e.g., policy/practice review).
- College implements solutions, evaluates them, and makes improvements.
- College builds a culture of continuous improvement.

### **What student data is routinely analyzed and used to inform decisions?**

- Completion of developmental education and advancement to credit courses
- Successful completion of gatekeeper courses
- Successful completion of all courses with a “C” or better
- Term-to-term persistence
- Degree and certificate completion

### **What are the benefits of continuing to participate in Achieving the Dream?**

- Assistance with implementation of improvement model that breaks down silos, leverages resources, and encourages broad engagement
- Coaching, guidance, and referrals to resources and other institutions
- Membership in a national learning community which hosts an annual conference (DREAM) focused on successful policies and practices
- Access to a comprehensive web site ([achievingthedream.org](http://achievingthedream.org))
- Help integrating the student success agenda into other core work (e.g., planning, accreditation, performance funding)
- Impact of a national policy agenda that supports student success
- Use of a central database for benchmarking and comparison to other colleges.
- Could see a substantial return on investment (due to increased retention)
- Access to grant opportunities made available only to ATD colleges

### **What does a successful Achieving the Dream college look like?**

- Leaders pay *continuous* attention to the student success agenda.
- There is *shared* and *enacted* vision around student success.
- IR capacity is increasing, and a culture of evidence and inquiry is pervasive.
- There is broad and continuous engagement/collaboration around student success.
- Focus on student success is embedded in the culture and influences policies, procedures, and practices.
- The student success agenda is integrated with other significant core initiatives.

- Planning, budgeting, professional development, and evaluation are aligned with the student success agenda.

### **How do mature colleges organize to continue the work?**

Continuing ATD colleges retain an organizational structure to do the work, although the core team and data team may now be combined into a **student success council**. This council continues to lead and coordinate data analysis and the change process. In addition, colleges continue to create small **strategy teams** to assess and recommend improvements. Strategy teams are often comprised of someone from the student success council, along with other faculty/staff.

### Ongoing Responsibilities

- Identify existing values, assumptions, structures, and systems at the college that nurture or impede student success.
- Lead the setting and monitoring of priorities, goals, and strategies.
- Ensure that data work is focused on key issues and concerns. Discuss performance on outcomes and gaps across sub-groups. Help engage stakeholders in conversation about outcomes.
- Ensure that work is aligned with core college work and ensure resources are available to support scaling and sustainability.
- Ensure that interventions and strategies are evaluated for effectiveness. Discuss evaluation results and make determinations about what is working or not working.
- Provide leadership for continuously building a culture of inquiry, reflection, and commitment to student success.

## **Continuing the Work**

### **Re-engage and assess current status**

- Annually, evaluate work of the Student Success Council. Re-invigorate and review the purpose of the Council to build commitment. Add additional members (e.g., faculty).
- Analyze the current situation:
  - Review and discuss student cohort data and analyze causes.

- Review and discuss ongoing barriers to student success (e.g., developmental education, financial aid, cumbersome registration process, etc.). Use an inventory.
- Discuss applicability of implementing high impact practices (based on research).
- Review results of annual *Principles Assessment* and discuss reflection report.

### **Revise work plan**

- Set new priorities (as appropriate), or re-commit to current ones.
- Revise annual work plan based on new learning. Establish expected goals and outcomes. Create strategy teams to address revised plan.
- Discuss work in board, leadership, and department meetings. Engage commitment from others.
- Implement new strategies or continue with successful ones.

### **Evaluate and scale (or abandon) practices**

- Assess effectiveness and scale, if appropriate. Revise or abandon, if not.
- Use both formative (process) and summative (impact) evaluation techniques.

### INVENTORY OF HIGH IMPACT POLICIES AND PRACTICES

This inventory may be used to guide an institutional review of policies and practices.

YES	NO	
_____	_____	Mandate assessment <i>and</i> placement
_____	_____	Mandate early orientation
_____	_____	Mandate early/continuous advising and counseling
_____	_____	Stop late registration
_____	_____	Offer late-start classes
_____	_____	Provide case management and/or success coaches
_____	_____	Provide boot camps prior to classes to ensure at-risk students are more ready for college
_____	_____	Offer bridge programs for high school students with pre-assessment refresher; intensive workshops (math, reading, writing)
_____	_____	Accelerate progress through developmental programs (e.g., course re-design; fast-track math; math modules in emporium structure)
_____	_____	Offer contextualized developmental education
_____	_____	<i>Require</i> learning lab participation or supplemental instruction for students who need it
_____	_____	Implement early alert systems
_____	_____	Create educational plans for students with clear, coherent pathways
_____	_____	Mandate success course for students in developmental education
_____	_____	Link student success course and developmental education in a learning community
_____	_____	Offer learning communities for First Time in College (FTIC) students
_____	_____	Provide math refresher in orientation <i>before</i> assessment
_____	_____	Offer math labs
_____	_____	Require “reading first” and/or integrate it into other courses
_____	_____	Align developmental education and gateway competencies
_____	_____	Create a partnership with K-12 to improve college-going activity
_____	_____	Establish a team, or council, to coordinate all student success work