

A shared commitment to increase opportunity

National initiative aims to enhance the success of community college students

ACHIEVING THE DREAMSM

COMMUNITY

COLLEGES

COUNT

What is Achieving the DreamSM?

Achieving the Dream: Community Colleges Count addresses a national imperative: to enhance opportunity for the growing number of students for whom community colleges are the point of entry into higher education. The initiative is a national effort to increase the success of community college students, particularly those in groups that have been underserved in higher education.

As its name implies, Achieving the Dream is an initiative that aims to help more students reach their individual goals, which may include obtaining a better job, earning a community college certificate or degree, or attaining a bachelor's degree.

Why does it matter?

The nation's 1,200 community colleges play a critical role in providing postsecondary education to a broad population, education that is vital in today's global economy. They enroll close to half of all undergraduates, and they attract particularly high proportions of underserved students, including low-income students, first-generation college-goers and students of color. In 2002, community colleges enrolled 47 percent of all African-American students, 56 percent of all Hispanics and 57 percent of all Native Americans.

Providing open access to higher education has always been a vital role of community colleges. Unfortunately, access does not always lead to success. A recent study by the Community College

Research Center, for example, reveals that, among students seeking an associate's degree or higher, only 53 percent earned a degree or transferred to a four-year institution within eight years of initial enrollment. And other research has shown that completion rates vary widely by race and ethnicity, with students of color attaining degrees at significantly lower rates than do white and Asian students. This achievement gap must be addressed – to create individual opportunity for millions of students, and to ensure the nation's continued economic vitality.

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What does it mean to be an Achieving the Dream college?

To attain high rates of success among all students, especially historically underserved students, Achieving the Dream asserts

that colleges must have a student-centered vision, a culture of evidence and accountability, and a commitment to excellence and equity. Specifically, participating colleges have pledged to maintain students' access while working to increase the percentage of them who accomplish the following:

- Complete remedial courses and move on to credit-bearing courses.

Partner organizations

American Association of Community Colleges

www.aacc.nche.edu

Community College Leadership Program,
University of Texas-Austin

www.utexas.edu/academic/cclp

Community College Research Center,
Teachers College, Columbia University

www.tc.columbia.edu/ccrc

Futures Project, Brown University

www.futuresproject.org

Jobs for the Future

www.jff.org

Lumina Foundation for Education

www.luminafoundation.org

MDC

www.mdcinc.org

MDRC

www.mdrc.org

Public Agenda

www.publicagenda.org

