

**Copyright**

**by**

**Linda Parker Lebile**

**2011**

**The Dissertation Committee for Linda Parker Lebile  
Certifies that this is the approved version of the following dissertation:**

**EXAMINING LEADERSHIP PRACTICES AT ACHIEVING THE DREAM  
LEADER COLLEGES: A MULTIPLE CASE STUDY**

**Committee:**

---

**John E. Roueche, Jr., Supervisor**

---

**Martha N. Ovando**

---

**Richard J. Reddick**

---

**Norma V. Cantu**

---

**Walter G. Bumphus**

**EXAMINING LEADERSHIP PRACTICES AT ACHIEVING THE DREAM  
LEADER COLLEGES: A MULTIPLE CASE STUDY**

by

**Linda Parker Lebile, B.S.; M.A.**

**Dissertation**

Presented to the Faculty of the Graduate School of

The University of Texas at Austin

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements

for the Degree of

**Doctor of Philosophy**

The University of Texas at Austin

December 2011

## **Acknowledgements**

First and foremost, I give honor and thanks to my Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ for His unconditional love and unmerited favor to get me through this arduous process.

To Dr. John E. Roueche, Jr., committee chairperson, professor, mentor, and friend, thank you for welcoming me into the Community College Leadership Program and for your encouragement to help me reach a level I did not know existed.

To Dr. Martha N. Ovando, committee member, professor, friend, and dissertation guide, without whom, I do not know how I would have finished the journey.

To Dr. Richard J. Reddick, my methodologist and friend, who was always available to gently guide me to completion.

To Dr. Norma V. Cantu, committee member, who found the time to turn the pages with me to show me “the way”.

To Dr. Walter G. Bumphus, committee member, friend, and mentor, who always told me, “Don’t try to explain the magic”.

To my children, Miatta and Ian Lebile, I love you and thank you for your patience and assistance through this journey.

To my mother, who always gave me her best.

To my brother, Dennis R. Parker and wife Cynthia R. Parker for their unwavering prayers and support, I love you.

To my dear friends, Tracie and Willie Burroughs, who accepted me as an extension of their family, I love you and thank you for your prayers, trust, love, and spare room.

To my sister friends, Sheryl Holland and Juanita Bradley for encouraging me through the storms, I love you and thank you.

To Dr. Norvell Northcutt, professor and friend, for his early guidance through the process. Thank you.

To the community colleges that participated in the study, without whom this would not have been possible. Thank you.

To all of the members of the Department of Educational Administration, especially Mrs. Ruth Thompson, Mrs. Hortensia Palomares, and Mrs. Beverly Hurbace, who were always available to help douse my fires. Thank you.

To Block 65 for their support and companionship on the journey. Dr. Annesa Cheek, Dr. Leslie Coward, Dr. Mia Leggett, Dr. Karla Bender, and Dr. Janice Marshall, thanks for the encouragement. I could not have completed this task without you.

To members of Block 64, especially Dr. Marie Sesay, Dr. Abdul Tamimi, Dr. Dana Sendziol, and Dr. Ted Lewis, for their willingness to assist me whenever I asked.

To Dr. Cher Brock for her constant guidance.

To Colleen Brock for always giving me a place to rest my weary head.

To Debbie Dean for her prayers.

To the Achieving the Dream team for their support.

And to all who parted a kind word of encouragement along the way, I am eternally grateful.

## **Examining Leadership Practices at Achieving the Dream Leader Colleges:**

### **A Multiple Case Study**

Linda Parker Lebile, Ph.D.

The University of Texas at Austin, 2011

Supervisor: John E. Roueche, Jr.

Achieving the Dream (AtD) assumes that leadership is critical for student success. These Leader Colleges have been able to demonstrate innovation sustainability through specific practices leading to increased student outcomes, while others have not been able to sustain the same level of student success. Limited research exists which highlights specific leadership practices employed by Achieving the Dream colleges, particularly Leader Colleges, which are known for being successful in sustaining innovations.

The purpose of this study was to ascertain leadership practices used to increase student success through sustained innovation at two Achieving the Dream Leader Colleges. This study may add to the knowledge base regarding Achieving the Dream colleges as well as sustainability practices leading to increased student success in community colleges.

The research was guided by the following questions:

- What leadership practices were employed by the Chief Executive Officer, Board of Trustees, Leadership Team, and Faculty to sustain innovation that led to increased student success?
- What was the perception of the AtD coach and data facilitator regarding the leadership practices that contributed to student success?

- What obstacles to change were encountered by internal stakeholders during innovation sustainability?

This qualitative study consisted of three components: interviews, focus group, and document reviews with purposeful sampling. The participants included Chief Executive Officers, Board of Trustees members, the Leadership Team, faculty, and Achieving the Dream coaches and data facilitators at two AtD Leader Colleges.

Findings from the study indicated: (a) commitment and support must be priorities of the Chief Executive Officer and senior leaders of the institution; (b) using data to inform decisions illuminates achievement gaps; (c) communication between internal and external stakeholders is imperative to affect change; (d) the institutionalization of interventions is essential to sustain student success; and (e) leading with passion is a critical component of leadership.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

|   |    |
|---|----|
| CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION.....  | 1  |
| Introduction.....   | 1  |
| Leadership.....   | 4  |
| The Evolution of Community College Leadership Styles.....                   | 6  |
| Attributes of Effective Community College Leaders.....                      | 8  |
| Kouzes and Posner’s “Characteristics of Admired Leaders” Questionnaire..... | 13 |
| Achieving the Dream: Making a Difference.....                               | 14 |
| Statement of the Problem.....   | 16 |
| Purpose of the Study.....   | 17 |
| Research Questions.....   | 18 |
| Methodology.....  | 18 |
| Significance of Study.....  | 19 |
| Definition of Terms.....  | 20 |
| Delimitations.....  | 21 |
| Limitations.....  | 21 |
| Assumptions.....  | 21 |
| Summary.....  | 22 |
| CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE.....                                  | 23 |
| Introduction.....   | 23 |
| The Achievement Gap.....  | 24 |
| Studies of Achievement Gap Practices and Programs.....                      | 29 |
| Achieving the Dream: Achieving Outcomes.....                                | 32 |
| Core Principles of Achieving the Dream.....                                 | 36 |
| Committed leadership.....   | 36 |
| Use of evidence to improve policies, programs, and services.....            | 37 |
| Broad engagement.....   | 39 |
| Systemic institutional improvement.....                                     | 41 |
| Achieving the Dream’s Strategic Planning Process.....                       | 42 |
| Achieving the Dream Leadership Approaches.....                              | 43 |
| Transformational leadership.....  | 43 |
| Innovation in Education.....  | 49 |
| Sustainability.....   | 50 |
| Summary.....  | 52 |
| CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY.....   | 54 |
| Introduction.....   | 54 |
| Research Design.....  | 55 |
| Qualitative Research.....   | 55 |
| Sample Selection and Description of Participants.....                       | 60 |
| Data Collection.....  | 63 |
| Coding Process and Data Analysis.....                                       | 67 |
| Reliability.....  | 69 |
| Validity.....   | 69 |



|   |     |
|---|-----|
| Summary .....   | 70  |
| CHAPTER FOUR: PARTICIPANTS PROFILES .....                 | 72  |
| Introduction.....   | 72  |
| Community College One Mission and Values .....            | 78  |
| Community College One Participant Profiles .....          | 81  |
| Community College One Student Success Initiatives .....   | 87  |
| Community College Two Mission and Values.....             | 96  |
| Community College Two Participant Profiles.....           | 99  |
| Community College Two Student Success Initiatives.....    | 105 |
| CHAPTER FIVE: RESEARCH FINDINGS.....                      | 108 |
| Introduction.....   | 108 |
| Findings .....  | 109 |
| Research Question One.....                                | 109 |
| Research Question Two .....                               | 143 |
| Research Question Three .....                             | 150 |
| CHAPTER SIX: SUMMARY, IMPLICATIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS ..... | 160 |
| Introduction.....   | 160 |
| Summary of the Study .....                                | 160 |
| Findings .....  | 163 |
| Conclusions.....  | 175 |
| Implications for Practice.....                            | 176 |
| Implications for Future Research.....                     | 178 |
| Appendix A.....   | 180 |
| Appendix B .....  | 182 |
| Appendix C .....  | 184 |
| REFERENCES .....  | 185 |

## List of Tables

| TABLE  | Page |
|--|------|
| 1 MIPR Public High School Graduation and College Readiness Rates in U.S.....     | 26   |
| 2 Nation’s 12 <sup>th</sup> Grade Average (Avg.) Math Scores.....                | 28   |
| 3 12 <sup>th</sup> Grade Average Reading Scores by Race/Ethnicity .....          | 29   |
| 4 County Demographics for Community College One .....                            | 74   |
| 5 County Annual Unemployment Rate for Community College One.....                 | 75   |
| 6 Total Firms in County in 2007 Community College One .....                      | 76   |
| 7 Employed Civilians in County by Industry: 2006-2008 .....                      | 77   |
| 8 Student Enrollment Demographics for Community College One .....                | 79   |
| 9 County Demographics for Community College Two .....                            | 92   |
| 10 County Annual Unemployment Rate.....  | 93   |
| 11 Total Firms in County in 2007 for Community College Two .....                 | 94   |
| 12 Top 20 Employers 4 <sup>th</sup> Quarter 2010 for Community College Two ..... | 95   |
| 13 Student Enrollment Demographics for Community College Two .....               | 98   |

## List of Figures

| <b>FIGURES</b>   | <b>Page</b> |
|--|-------------|
| 1 Community College One – Developmental Education Areas .....  | 89          |
| 2 Community College One – Percent of First Time in College Students<br>Who are College Ready in Math, Reading, and Writing ..... | 90          |
| 3 Community College Two – Persistence Rates Involving the Soar Program .....   | 106         |
| 4 Community College Two – Term to Term and Year to Year Retention .....  | 107         |
| 5 Achieving the Dream’s Five-Step Process for Increasing Student Success.....  | 164         |

## CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

### Introduction

*“The scope of the problem is enormous, the stakes are high, and the return on investment is huge. The work is hard, but it is possible. We can do it. Moreover, we should do it, indeed we must”* (McClenney, 2009, p. 60).

Today’s community college leaders are facing enormous challenges, but one of the greatest is the lack of college completion by almost half of the millions of students community colleges serve. Despite open access, affordable tuition, financial aid, flexible schedules, and convenient locations, many students are still not completing their studies. Less than 46% of community college students complete their associate’s degree within six years (AtD, 2005f). The U.S. has fallen behind other industrialized nations in degree attainment. According to Lenz (2011), the U. S. has dropped from 12<sup>th</sup> to 16<sup>th</sup> place. Through the American Graduation Initiative, President Obama has challenged America to once again lead the world in college degrees by 2020. Community colleges were challenged by the President to graduate an additional five million students by 2020 (White House, 2009). Improving student success and completion rates at community colleges will require transformational leaders who support and inspire an institutional culture shift that includes innovation and organizational change in attitudes, beliefs, behaviors, practices, programs, and policies. “Changing the culture of an institution requires strong leadership. Strong leadership can move institutions traditionally preoccupied with access, to adopt a new emphasis on access and success” (Lumina, 2008, p.31). Once the necessary changes have been assimilated into the infrastructure of the

organization, they must be institutionalized and sustained to produce continual success in persistence and completion.

According to the American Association of Community Colleges (AACC, 2011), the estimated enrollment in fall 2008 for the nearly 1,200 U.S. community colleges was 12.4 million students comprising 44% of all undergraduates in the United States. Further examination of the composition of community colleges reveal that 43% of all first-time freshmen in the U.S. attend community college, 55% of all Native Americans, 45% of all Asian/Pacific Islanders, 44% of all Blacks, and 52% of all Hispanics in the U.S. attend community college. Additional student body demographics for fall 2008 included a gender makeup of 58% women and 42% men. The average age of enrolled students was 28 years old with 13% being single parents (AACC, 2011). In Texas, more than half of the state's undergraduates are enrolled in community colleges (THECB, 2008).

Community colleges attract high percentages of low-income, minority and first-generation college students (Lumina, 2005). In effect, they enroll the students who face the most barriers to education (Bailey & Morest, 2006). This country is experiencing an educational crisis. Current solutions to our educational deficits are not producing much, if any, improvement in student outcomes. There is an urgent need for community college leaders who can influence and improve student outcomes to provide a national workforce, global competitiveness and a good quality of life for students.

A major barrier that prevents students from completing and succeeding in community college is the lack of college preparation, which has become problematic and almost epidemic as stakeholders and educators blame each other for the failure of our

educational system to adequately prepare students to complete college. The uneven nature of academic preparation and acculturation causes inequity for entering college students. Bailey and Morest (2006) argue that the focus for higher education today should be equity, ensuring access to college and adequate support for all students including those who face financial, social, or educational barriers in achieving their postsecondary educational goals. Community colleges play an important role in the equity agenda.

The most fundamental American promises, though, are the promises of opportunity and equity for every individual... This is the land where a person born in humble circumstances, if she is willing to work hard, can rise to the highest level, can grow wealthy and secure, can contribute, can become President (McClenney, 2004, p. 7).

Education is the key to social equity. Orr and Bragg (2001) assert social equity combines the goals of access and mobility (p. 107). These two goals are reflected in public policy, *Goals 2000 Educate America Act* (Goals, 2000), which emphasizes increasing academic standards for all students, assisting their transition to higher education and in doing so, promoting social mobility opportunities as a part of democratic equity. Social mobility affords students the chance to advance in life.

Community colleges in America are operating at a pivotal time in history as they embrace a knowledge and global economy with the goals of educating students, creating a national workforce, and competing globally. Educational leadership is imperative in achieving these goals. Community college leaders must demonstrate a commitment to student success, acknowledge the failure of our current educational system, and recognize the need for change to improve student success. Change is an integral aspect of leadership. According to Kouzes and Posner (2007):

The work of leaders is change. And all change requires that leaders actively seek ways to make things better, to grow, innovate, and improve. Leadership is inextricably connected with the process of innovation, of bringing new ideas, methods, or solutions to use. (Kouzes & Posner, 2007, p. 164,165)

Educational reform has been a major concern for all levels of society. “For the first time in U.S. history, the current generation of college-age Americans will be less educated than their parents’ generation and yet, our workplaces require higher-level skills than ever before” (AtD, 2005a). In recognition of the importance of leadership to educational achievement, in 2004, Lumina Foundation launched Achieving the Dream: Community Colleges Count (CCRC, 2007). The Achieving the Dream: Community Colleges Count (AtD) initiative focuses primarily on students who have faced barriers to success, including minority and low-income students (CCRC, 2007). AtD believes the adoption of transformational leadership by community college leaders can improve student completion. However, before leaders can transform their institutions, they must first understand the implications and responsibility of leadership.

## **Leadership**

Though many have tried, few have succeeded in developing a succinct and precise definition of leadership. Research suggests leadership encompasses a variety of skills, attributes, and characteristics. Leadership means different things to different people and differs from author to author. Davis (2003) goes so far as to say “there is no unified theory of leadership” (p. 10).

Prevailing literature offers varied definitions of leadership. Davis maintains that leadership cannot produce any significant impact without including some degree of transformational construct. Burns (1978) defines the transformational leader as one who is motivated by the ability to engage the individual, and as a result of their interaction, both leader and follower are inspired toward self- actualization. Some authors define

leadership by the power of influence (Kouzes & Posner, 1989; Roueche, Baker, & Rose, 1989; Gardner, 1990). They assert that leaders shape the vision of the college and embed values and beliefs to get others to want to act. In essence, leadership is the process of persuasion by which an individual induces a group to pursue objectives held or shared by the leader and his or her followers. In fact, according to Hockaday and Puyear (2000), “leadership is more persuasion than precision” (p. 1). McCaffery (2004) and Kouzes & Posner (2007) add that leaders are guides who lead people through life’s many challenges.

Others maintain that leadership is an art (Kouzes & Posner, 1989; De Pree, 1989); it is not learned simply by reading books, but with practice over time (De Pree, 1989). In the art of leadership, the artist’s instrument is the self; in order to master the art, the leader must master the self (Kouzes & Posner, 1989, p. 298). A different perspective by De Pree suggests the art of leadership is “liberating people to do what is required of them in the most effective and humane way possible” (p. 1). Therefore, De Pree purports leadership is more a condition of the heart than a list of things to do.

Gardner (1990) argues the reason *leader* and *leadership* have been defined so many different ways is to disguise the lack of goal attainment. Zenger and Folkman (2009) illuminate various reasons why leadership appears to be so ambiguous: (a) Leadership behavior, practices, and roles are different for different levels within an organization; (b) environments requiring leadership are extremely diverse; (c) career stages require different skills during a person’s career; (d) major events are driving forces for leadership; (e) there is ambiguity in how success is measured, with some measuring



success by money and titles, while others measure success by organizational needs; and (f) there is no standard measure of effective leadership and it is unclear who is best to evaluate leadership effectiveness.

Then there are those who define leadership as a value-based purposeful process designed to create change by establishing direction and aligning people and resources (Astin & Astin, 2000; Drucker, 1999; O'Toole, 1996). Just as there are multiple definitions and aspects of leadership, so are there multiple styles of leadership.

### **The Evolution of Community College Leadership Styles**

The leadership style of early community colleges was very structured and traditional. By the 1960s, it was characterized as being bureaucratic and authoritarian (Kotter, 1996; Roueche et al., 1989). This style was also described as traditional, formal, hierarchical, and elitist (Astin & Astin, 2000; Davis, 2003). In this traditional style, power was based on the position of the administrator. In the 1970s, the leadership style changed to a systems approach while simultaneously embracing the concept of management by objectives (Roueche et al., 1989). During the 1980s, leadership shifted to a participatory management style that was designed to create meaningful interactions between leaders and followers (Roueche et al., 1989, p. 141). Leadership styles have evolved across multiple generations of community colleges leaders. Sullivan (2001) reveals four generations of community college leadership.

**Founding fathers:** The first generation of presidents was known as the founding fathers and is credited as the pioneers of this 'new' form of higher education.

**Managers:** The second generation constituted good managers who led the colleges

through rapid growth and resources. Sullivan (2001) further reveals the first two generations of presidents were characterized as typically being married White men in their 50s with K12 backgrounds who had worked their way up the ladder through academic ranks. Most of them held doctorates and some were veterans of World War II or the Korean War. Their styles were traditional and hierarchical (Sullivan, 2001; Roueche et al., 1989). During these first two generations, community colleges tended to espouse the industrial model of collective bargaining along with the university model for faculty relations. These leaders were able to grow small community colleges into large bureaucracies with almost unlimited resources and great community support. By the early 1990s, most of these presidents had retired, leaving behind generations three and four.

**Collaborators:** The third generation consisted of collaborators trying to leverage limited resources to offer unlimited access for all students. This generation of leaders also participated as team leaders.

**Transformers:** The fourth generation of transformational leaders will transform community colleges into institutions of choice for learning in the 21st century (Sullivan, 2001, p. 571). The fourth generation is much like the third generation, except they have been influenced by the personal computer and the Internet, and are comfortable with these tools. They also recognize the importance of building relationships with government agencies, business and industry, and the K-12 pipeline. A unique perspective of this generation is they place more emphasis on workforce development than social justice.

As community colleges grew and evolved from their traditional beginnings, leaders were also expected to grow and evolve. It is widely believed that leaders cannot remain in the past and govern in the future.

### **Attributes of Effective Community College Leaders**

Effective leaders are recognizable by certain characteristics. They are visionaries, problem solvers, and knowledgeable about the world around them. They demonstrate the capacity to communicate, challenge, inspire, enable, model, develop, and encourage followers, while creating trust among all stakeholders. The following are additional attributes that describe effective leaders:

**Intelligence and good judgment.** Leaders must demonstrate acumen, aptitude, and the ability to make sound and rational decisions in problem solving, strategy design, and goal setting. It is not luck when leaders effectively anticipate and predict reactions; it is good judgment, an attribute that comes easier for some than others, but through experience can be learned (Gardner, 1990; Hockaday & Puyear, 2000). When leaders do not display good judgment, followers begin to doubt their abilities and eventually stop following.

**Boldness, innovation, and resolve.** “Leaders do not shun conflict; they confront it, exploit it, [and] ultimately embody it” (Burns, 1978, p. 39). Leaders accept challenge and are willing to take risks and encourage others to take risks as they try innovative practices. Leaders need more than courage for the moment; leaders need courage over time. Leaders who display courage also display confidence (Kouzes & Posner, 1989; Gardner, 1990; Kotter, 1996; Hockaday & Puyear, 2000). A leader

cannot encourage others if he or she is unwilling to take risks. Through the bold leadership of President Stephen K. Mittelstet, Richland College (RC) in Dallas, TX, was the first community college to receive the Malcolm Baldrige Quality Award, the nation's highest honor for performance excellence. By adopting the Baldrige performance excellence benchmarks, RC has been able to create a college culture where it is safe to take risks (Mittelstet, 2008).

**Enthusiasm to accept responsibility.** Leaders need to show initiative and take responsibility for making decisions. They should also accept challenges when others will not. Great leaders want to lead and should lead by example and commitment (Gardner, 1990; Hockaday & Puyear, 2000; Kouzes & Posner, 1989).

**Vision.** A visionary leader must know the immediate and future direction of the college and how it will look once it reaches that future. He or she is abreast of current events and changes in the economy, technology, community, and the world. Leaders inspire a shared vision by influencing others to adopt their vision (Kouzes & Posner, 1989; Roueche et al., 1989; Hockaday & Puyear, 2000). "Without vision, the leader is merely an administrator taking care of the daily chores" (Hockaday & Puyear, 2000, p. 1). A leader without vision is also blind to opportunities that should be explored to grow and prosper the institution. As conveyed by Roueche et al., (1989), "a vision is more than any one individual's perspective" (p. 110).

Richard McDowell, president of Schoolcraft College in Michigan, concurred with Roueche et al., commenting:

Many of the people in our college have been here a long time, longer than I, and they also have expectations of the college. Since followers have an

opportunity to participate in designing the blueprint regarding the college's future direction, a vision of what the college is attempting to achieve, followers feel a greater sense of ownership and commitment in assisting the college to move in its newly prescribed direction. (p. 111)

**Motivation.** The ability to inspire people is at the core of leadership. Leaders encourage followers to proceed when the task becomes difficult. Inspiration is reciprocal. As leaders motivate followers, followers will respond in kind. Finally, it is important that leaders face their inner doubts and recognize that leadership is a process that takes time (Roueche et al., 1989; Kouzes & Posner, 1989; Gardner, 1990).

**Trust.** Trust is necessary to build relationships and demonstrate integrity. Leaders must be able to garner and sustain the trust of their constituents. When trust breaks down within an organization, it can detrimentally affect relationships, academic performance, and the reputation of the leader. Once the integrity and trust of a leader are in doubt, the leader is no longer perceived as effective. Followers will not accept leadership believed to be unreliable and nonchalant about the future of the people within the organization (Hockaday & Puyear, 2000; Gardner, 1990).

**Decision-making, managing, and prioritizing.** Leaders cannot afford to be indecisive, but must competently frame a course of action and make an appropriate decision (Kotter, 1996; Gardner, 1990). A leader's indecisiveness can 'sink the ship' or lead to stagnation within the organization. Former president of the College of Southern Nevada (CSN), Richard Carpenter found low morale and an unstable environment upon his arrival at CSN. There was continuous turnover and a lawless culture complete with nepotism and highly paid mid-management, many of which

had limited credentials (Carpenter, 2008). He knew he had to make some difficult changes. He froze hiring and began to evaluate and assess whom to retain among the management team. Carpenter conveyed “we were not shy about removing those who had positioned themselves as major and irrecoverable liabilities” (p. 120). As a result of his decision making, managing, and prioritizing attributes, within a few months many mid-management positions were eliminated, allowing \$1.3 million to be redirected to student and academic support (Carpenter, 2008). Pride and praise from internal and external stakeholders soon replaced the lawlessness and low morale that previously existed at CSN.

**Values.** Transformational leaders value people and demonstrate a dedication to learning; commitment to superior education; practice of respectable behavior, honesty and forthrightness; undeviating judgment; and humor as tools of power and influence (Roueche et al., 1989, p. 211). It is important that constituents within the organization know that they are valued; it is the responsibility of the leader to find ways to demonstrate their appreciation.

**Confidence and assurance.** Leaders should be self-assured and convey confidence as they lead the college toward its goals. Leaders exemplify a take-charge attitude without being forceful. They must seek to learn as much as possible about political, economic, social, moral, or artistic forces that may affect the institution. The more they know about the world, the easier it will be to ascertain and convey assurance to followers. Leaders must not display doubt and uncertainty, but should remain confident that they have made the best decision possible after considering

alternatives and seeking counsel from experts on the issue (Hockaday & Puyear, 2000; Gardner, 1990; Kouzes & Posner, 1989). Doubt and uncertainty will negatively affect the organization's confidence in the leader's ability. People want to be led by those who they believe are confident in themselves and their own abilities.

**Persistence.** Leaders do not give up, but continue moving toward their goals and mission despite obstacles and setbacks. Leaders are ambitious and driven to attain and exceed their objectives (Hockaday & Puyear, 2000; Gardner, 1990). After many years of patience and persistence, Donald W. Cameron, President of Guilford Technical and Community College (GTCC) in North Carolina, was able to forge successful partnerships with the community and local schools through the development of a Tech Prep program and a middle college. His efforts revitalized the business community and increased student enrollment and success at GTCC. Cameron (2008) stated, "I can say that it is a story of patient and persistent leadership that eventually produced results that I never dreamed of when I began" (p. 29).

**Knowledge.** Leaders should be knowledgeable about leadership and the system they are leading, including its mission and environment (Davis, 2003; Gardner, 1990). How does one lead if one does not know what he or she is leading?

**Understanding and dealing with people.** Leaders need to be equipped with social skills to appropriately interact with followers. When leaders do not exert the effort

to understand the organization's needs, it is perceived by followers as a lack of caring (Gardner, 1990).

**Strength through tasking and consideration.** Transformational leaders extend an opportunity to others to share ownership in decision-making and completing tasks (Roueche, et al., 1989). Chancellor Tom Van Groningen of Yosemite Community College District in California articulated this competency:

If a concept has merit, it has to be institutionalized and be able to survive without my being involved and without my being here. If the idea cannot do that, then it may not be the time or place for such a thought. If it is dependent on the strength of one individual or specifically, the CEO, then the concept is in trouble. (Roueche, et al., 1989, p. 149)

**The influence of others.** Leaders are aware that individuals within the organization are very important to achieving the goals of the college (Astin & Astin, 2000; Roueche, et al., 1989). President Patsy Fulton, Brookhaven College in Texas explained:

I believe that administration, first of all, is a service function. If we approach our administrative role from a 'service first' perspective, rather than a position of control and power, we are better apt to maximize the potential that exists within our professional bureaucracies. In fact, power in its positive sense is the capacity to translate educational needs into concrete plans and to carry these plans through to their successful completion for student learning and employee growth. (Roueche, et al., 1989, p. 152).

### **Kouzes and Posner's "Characteristics of Admired Leaders" Questionnaire**

More than 25 years ago, Kouzes and Posner (2007) began research to evaluate leadership traits, values, and characteristics most admired by constituents by surveying thousands of business and government executives. Since then, Kouzes and Posner have administered the survey to over 70,000 people around the world and continue to update



the findings. The study identified 20 characteristics most admired in leaders and results have been consistent over the years, varying very little. The 2007 survey revealed the four leadership characteristics most selected by respondents were honesty (89%), forward-looking (71%), inspiring (69%), and competent (68%), respectively. An honest leader is sincere and authentic in contrast to one who is insincere and pretentious. A forward-looking leader is indicative of a visionary who plans for the future while anticipating possibilities. An inspiring leader is one who motivates and influences his followers. A competent leader is very knowledgeable and capable of doing a great job. The fact that these competencies are chosen repeatedly comes as no surprise. Other researchers (Roueche, et al., 1989; Gardner, 1990; Hockaday & Puyear, 2000; Burns, 1978) have affirmed the importance of these leadership competencies. In addition to the four previously discussed characteristics, the following were cited in the survey: intelligent (48%), fair-minded (39%), straightforward (36%), broad-minded (35%), supportive (35%), dependable (34%), cooperative (25%), courageous (25%), determined (25%), caring (22%), imaginative (17%), mature (15), ambitious (16), loyal (18%), self-controlled, (10%) and (4%) independent (Posner & Kouzes, 2007, p. 30). These characteristics describe the type of leader who can make a difference in the daunting challenge of college retention and completion in this country.

### **Achieving the Dream: Making a Difference**

Since its inception in 2004 with 26 community colleges, 160 institutions across 30 states serving 2 million students have joined AtD, seeking solutions to improve student outcomes while reducing the achievement gap (AtD, 2011a). The primary goal of

Achieving the Dream is to improve student success and completion. This goal is achieved through outcomes in the areas of institutional change, policy change, public engagement, and knowledge development (AtD, 2005b). Many AtD colleges have made progress in implementing or changing programs, practices, and processes that have contributed to student success. Colleges who participate commit to collecting and examining data to improve student outcomes. After colleges have been members of Achieving the Dream for four years, demonstrated high performance sustainability in student outcomes on at least one performance measure for three years, and implemented one intervention with documented proof of substantially improved student outcomes, they may apply for Leader College status. As leaders, they serve as mentors to other colleges joining the initiative (AtD, 2005e). While most community colleges have not been able to achieve lasting sustainability in improving student success, Leader Colleges have. As of 2010, the number of Leader Colleges in the U.S. had increased to 29. This accomplishment is only attainable if participating colleges commit to the following four principles of Achieving the Dream:

1. Committed leadership – Active support from the Chief Executive Officer and leadership team to improve student outcomes and equity, not just enrollments.
2. Use of evidence to improve programs and services with IT capacity to accommodate the data and institutional research.
3. Broad engagement encompassing participation by all levels of staff and administrators to work towards student success.

4. Systemic institutional improvement in which institutions create a strategic planning process that uses evidence from data to create goals for student success. Budget allocations are connected to student success. (AtD, 2005d)

Each AtD college self examines strengths, weaknesses, and achievement gaps to determine which strategies would be most effective in eliminating or reducing the problem areas of student success. Some current successful innovative practices and programs of AtD participants include improvements in developmental education, gatekeeper courses, first year experiences, counseling and advising for at-risk students, tutoring and student support services, college readiness through fortifying K-12 relationships, creating learning communities, and learning to use data more purposefully to determine student outcomes and improve student success (AtD, 2010a).

AtD's model for student success includes a five-step process: (1) commitment by leaders to improve student outcomes, (2) using data to prioritize actions, (3) engaging stakeholders to help develop a plan, (4) implementing, evaluating, and improving strategies and (5) establishing a culture of continuous improvement (AtD, 2005c).

### **Statement of the Problem**

Achieving the Dream assumes that leadership is critical for student success. Limited research exists which highlights specific leadership practices employed by Achieving the Dream colleges, particularly Leader Colleges, which are known for being successful in sustaining innovations. Leader Colleges have been able to demonstrate sustainability through specific practices leading to increased student outcomes, while others have not been able to sustain the same level of student success. In fact, a recent

report in *The Chronicle of Higher Education* entitled *Turning the Tide: Five Years of Achieving the Dream in Community Colleges*, found that even though some colleges changed their practices significantly to improve student success, student outcomes have improved very little in persistence and developmental education. The report added that those who have been successful in improving student outcomes were able to do so because of leadership support and adequate institutional research (Gonzales, 2011).

Leader Colleges have improved student success on at least one of five performance measures including completing course work, progressing from remedial courses to credit-bearing courses, completing gatekeeper courses, retention from semester to semester and completing certificates and degrees (AtD, 2010b). They also successfully implemented at least one student success intervention such as mandatory orientation, intrusive advising, or student success courses, that resulted in documented substantial improvement in student outcomes (AtD, 2010a). There are very few leadership studies based on community colleges. Most are based on K-12, four-year institutions, or corporate businesses. Also, limited research exists which highlights specific leadership practices employed by AtD Leader Colleges.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to ascertain leadership practices used to increase student success through sustaining innovation at AtD Leader Colleges. This study added to the knowledge base regarding AtD Leader Colleges as well as sustainability practices leading to increased student success in community colleges. This study will allow other colleges to replicate the successes of the colleges represented in this study. This study

might also provide a model for how levels of leadership could use specific practices to sustain innovation that leads to student success. AtD Leader Colleges have demonstrated sustainability in student outcomes on at least one performance measure for three years and implemented one intervention with documented success. The Leader Colleges in this study have been chosen because they have been recognized and awarded by AtD and others for their outstanding work in improving and sustaining practices that contribute to student success.

### **Research Questions**

Three primary questions guided the research for this study.

1. What leadership practices were employed by the following stakeholders to sustain innovation that led to increased student success?
  - A. The Chief Executive Officer
  - B. The Board of Trustees
  - C. The Leadership Team
  - D. The Faculty
2. What was the perception of the AtD Coach and Data Facilitator regarding the leadership practices that led to increased student success?
3. What obstacles to change were encountered by stakeholders during innovation sustainability?

### **Methodology**

Through purposeful selection, this study used a qualitative multiple case study of two community colleges, one in Texas and the other in North Carolina, because these two

colleges have achieved high levels of student success, have been highly esteemed and recognized by Achieving the Dream and other community colleges, and have received awards for their student success accomplishments. A qualitative study focuses on people's experiences from their perspective (Roberts, 2004, p. 111). Qualitative studies are descriptive and include observations and interviews. In qualitative analysis, the trustworthiness of the study depends on the researcher's skill and competence (Roberts, 2004, p. 112). Denzin and Lincoln (2000) define qualitative research as a situated activity that locates the observer in the world of the participant, making the world visible through field-notes, interviews, focus groups, documentation reviews, conversations, photographs, recordings and memos to self (p. 3). Ritchie and Lewis (2006) add that qualitative research offers (a) comprehensive knowledge about the social world of research participants, including their experiences, perceptions, and past, (b) samples that are small with purposeful criteria, (c) a data collection process consisting of close interaction between researcher and participant, (d) data that is very thorough, in depth, and broad, (e) an expansive analysis, which could lead to the development of new explanations, and (f) results centering on the participants interpretation of their social world. Qualitative research requires learning to listen, interpret, and tell someone else's story (Glesne, 2006).

### **Significance of Study**

Identifying practices of the colleges included in this study will allow other colleges, Chief Executive Officers, board members, leadership teams, and faculty to better understand which leadership practices are vital to sustain innovations resulting in

improved outcomes. This study will also highlight any attributes that contributed to introduce and sustain initiatives, as well as document the progress that First Round AtD colleges have made, according to the coaches and data facilitators who were in a position to closely observe what it took to be successful. Finally, community college leaders interested in introducing innovations and/or change may find relevant information about the challenges faced and how these were addressed in order to ensure student success.

### **Definition of Terms**

1. Community college: a two-year public institution of higher education with the mission to serve the educational needs of the community, making higher education accessible to anyone (AACC, 2008)
2. Developmental Education: a term used interchangeably with remediation to describe courses of study that develop basic proficiency skills needed for success in college courses (AACC, 2000)
3. Student success: retention from year-to-year leading to completion of certificates or degrees (AtD, 2010b, p. 4)
4. CEO: Chief Executive Officer at the college responsible for leading commitment efforts to enhance student success (AtD, 2010b, p. 3)
5. Leadership team: senior administrators committed to achieving equity in student success by supporting policy changes that lead to student success (AtD, 2010b, p.9)
6. Faculty: instructors who actively support a broad-based student success agenda (AtD, 2010b, p. 9)

7. Coaches and Data Facilitators: responsible for assessing and evaluating *Achieving the Dream* college performance (AtD, 2010b, p. 7). Coaches are typically retired community college presidents who offer a wealth of experience in leadership and transformation. The data facilitators have experience in working with data and institutional research (AtD, 2011b)
8. Student outcomes: the ending result of students efforts
9. Board of Trustees: governing board for the college who demonstrates support for Chief Executive Officer as it implements necessary changes to facilitate student success (AtD, 2010b, p. 9)

### **Delimitations**

The researcher exceeded goals for data collection and individual interviews at Community College One, but experienced scheduling difficulties with faculty for a focus group at Community College Two. Overall, the data was rich and more than sufficient for the purposes of this study.

### **Limitations**

The researcher anticipated and handled the potential for bias as sole researcher. The researcher used triangulation to reduce the likelihood of bias.

### **Assumptions**

In order to frame the context for this study, several assumptions were made by the researcher:

1. Leadership is critical for student success.



2. Leadership represented by the Chief Executive Officer, Board members, Leadership team, and faculty at participating Achieving the Dream Leader colleges used specific practices to sustain innovation.
3. Innovation sustainability improved student success.

### **Summary**

This chapter provided an introduction to the study, the statement of the problem, and the purpose of the study. It also discussed the definition, role, and attributes of leadership. The research questions, methodology, definition of terms, significance of the study, limitations, delimitations, and assumptions were discussed in sequential order. The following chapter includes a review of the literature relevant to Achieving the Dream and leadership.

## **CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE**

### **Introduction**

Community colleges are responsible for educating 44% of all undergraduates in the U.S., representing 12.4 million students (AACC, 2011). However, today, less than 46% of community college students complete their associate's degree within six years (AtD, 2005f) while 41% of entering students require remediation (McCabe, 2000). Improving student outcomes has been unsuccessful for most community colleges. This daunting challenge will require leaders who commit to (a) improving student outcomes, (b) seeking innovative and sustainable practices, and (c) transforming their institutions systemically to create a culture of success. Our educational system is under attack by the entire world. We have slipped from first place in degree attainment to tenth place (Kelley, 2010). National and global economic influences within the last 20 years have led us into a knowledge economy (Alfred, Shults, Jaquette & Strickland, 2009). As a result of the rapidly growing knowledge economy, the accountability of community colleges to produce more graduates has intensified. In order to remain competitive with the rest of the world, we must build an educated workforce. According to Kelley (2010), as of 2008, only 37.8% of adults in the U.S. between the ages of 25 and 34 held college degrees. This lack of degree attainment has placed the U.S. in tenth place in the 24 to 34-age category behind Canada, Korea, Japan, New Zealand, Ireland, Norway, France, Belgium, and Australia, respectively. Auguste, Cota, Jayaram, and Laboissiere (2010) reported that college degree attainment rates are increasing in almost every industrialized nation except the United States. The matter is so urgent President Obama is challenging the U.S. to lead

the world once again in college completions by 2020. For community colleges, this goal means an additional five million graduates by 2020 (White House, 2009). The majority of those who are not completing community college are minority and low-income students. This lack of degree completion has created a gap in the educational achievement between racial groups. Achievement gaps create barriers to success and can lead to social and economic problems within society.

### **The Achievement Gap**

Achieving the Dream believes that the achievement gap can be reduced if leadership seriously commits to making student success a priority. The achievement gap represents disparity in academic achievement between minority groups and other students. According to the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), “Achievement gaps occur when one group of students outperforms another group and the difference in average scores between the two groups is statistically significant” (NCES, 2010). The continued existence of substantial minority-majority educational gaps is prohibitively costly, not only for minorities, but for the nation as a whole. Among the most compelling reasons for seeking to eliminate these gaps as soon as possible are the following: 1) the achievement of significantly higher minority education levels is essential to the long-term productivity and competitiveness of the U.S. economy; 2) if minorities are to enjoy the full benefits of their recently won civil rights, they need formal-education-dependent knowledge and skills much closer in quantity and quality to those held by whites; and 3) the maintenance of a humane and harmonious society

depends to a considerable degree on minorities' reaching educational parity with whites. (Miller, 1995, p.4)

The achievement gap problem is grave in the United States. Between the 1970's and 1980's academic achievement of African American and Latino students greatly improved. But during the 1990's, the gaps began to grow in some grades while remaining stagnant in others (Haycock, 2001). In 1999 by the end of high school, only 2% of Latino and 1% of African American 17-year-olds could read and comprehend specialized text such as the science section of the newspaper, compared to 8.3% of White students. The statistics concerning mathematics were equally dismal, indicating only about 3.3% of Latino and 1% of African American students could do multilevel problem solving and elementary algebra well, compared to 10% of White students. Sadly, by the end of high school, African American and Latino students exhibit skills in both reading and mathematics equivalent to performance by White students in 8<sup>th</sup> grade (Haycock, 2001).

Haycock (2001) contends that the problem with our current system is, it does not ask enough of the students and students do not feel challenged. Her first recommendation is a revision of educational standards to exemplify clear expectations while also serving as a guide for teachers, administrators, parents, and students to ensure that each group understands the competencies students must master. Secondly, Haycock recommends a rigorous curriculum to allow students to improve performance on tests. Next, she proposes intervention to prevent students from falling further behind in their studies. Lastly, according to Haycock teachers must be held accountable for demonstrating proficiency in their subject areas.

According to the Manhattan Institute for Policy Research (MIPR), each year approximately a million students who should graduate from high school do not (Green & Forster, 2003). They are, therefore, condemned to a lifetime of lower income and limited opportunities (p. 2). Using data from the U.S. Department of Education, MIPR conducted a study to determine graduation and college readiness rates in the U.S. College readiness was based on three criteria: students must have been eligible to graduate from high school, they must have taken certain courses in high school that colleges require to demonstrate certain skills, and they must have demonstrated basic literacy skills (Green & Forster, 2003). Table 1 summarizes their findings.

**Table 1**

**MIPR Public High School Graduation and College Readiness Rates in U.S.**

| <b>Students</b>         | <b>Graduate<br/>Percent</b> | <b>Leave College Ready<br/>Percent</b> |
|-------------------------|-----------------------------|--|
| All Public High Schools | 70                          | 32                                     |
| Asian                   | 79                          | 38                                     |
| White                   | 72                          | 37                                     |
| Black                   | 51                          | 20                                     |
| Hispanic                | 52                          | 16                                     |
| American Indian         | 54                          | 14                                     |

SOURCE: Green & Forster, 2003

The findings clearly indicate that less than half of each group of students is graduating high school college-ready. While 70% of all public school students in the study graduated, 30% did not. Asians and Whites graduated college-ready more than the

other groups. According to this data, few Blacks, Hispanics, and American Indians are prepared to enter college. This study confirms the need for alignment of high school courses with college expectations. It also suggests an achievement gap between the groups. Achievement gaps create inequity. The authors concluded that Black and Hispanic students are underrepresented in college not because of the lack of financial aid or inadequate affirmative action policies, but because the K-12 educational system failed to adequately prepare them for college (Green & Forster, 2003).

The study also examined graduation rates by region in the U.S. Rates in the Northeast (73%) and the Midwest (77%) exceeded the national rate (70%), but graduation rates in the South (65%) and West (69%) were lower than the national rate (Green & Forster, 2003). The college readiness rate for the Northeast and the Midwest was 32%. The South had a higher graduation rate of 38%, while the West had the lowest rate of 25%. North Dakota had the highest graduation rate among the states with 89%, while Florida had the lowest graduation rate of 56% (Green & Forster, 2003).

The Nation's Report Card by the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) revealed in Table 2, that even though all racial groups improved some in the 2009 math assessment, achievement gaps still exist. Forty-nine thousand 12<sup>th</sup> grade students from 1,670 schools were assessed in math. Results indicate between 2005 and 2009, math scores improved more for Asian/Pacific Islanders and American Indian/Alaska Natives than other groups with an average gain of 11 points between the two groups. Scores improved very little for Whites, Blacks, or Hispanics, averaging only a four-point gain (NCES, 2009). Findings suggested a possible cause for the gap was

students who took advanced math courses scored higher on the average than those who took lower-level math.

**Table 2**

**Nation's 12<sup>th</sup> Grade Average (Avg.) Math Scores  
by Race/Ethnicity on a 300 Point Scale**

| Ethnicity                     | Average Scores |      |
|-------------------------------|----------------|------|
|                               | 2005           | 2009 |
| White                         | 157            | 161  |
| Black                         | 127            | 131  |
| Hispanic                      | 133            | 138  |
| Asian/Pacific Islander        | 163            | 175  |
| American Indian/Alaska Native | 134            | 144  |

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), 2009 Mathematics Assessment.

Table 3 represents the 2009 national reading assessment by NAEP. As in math, the reading scores confirm the continuation of an achievement gap between groups. Fifty-two thousand students representing 1,670 schools were assessed in reading. According to NAEP, even though the average reading gap for 12<sup>th</sup> graders increased between 2005 and 2009, White, Black, and Hispanic student scores fell below 1992 levels. The Asian/Pacific Islander and American Indian/Alaska Native students scored above their 1992 levels during this time period. Data indicate Asian/Pacific Islanders achieved the most significant increase with an 11-point average gain from 2005 to 2009 (NCES,

2009). Though NAEP did not identify causes for the decrease, it noted that a multitude of factors could influence student achievement, such as educational policies, resources, and demographics.

**Table 3**

**12<sup>th</sup> Grade Average Reading Scores by Race/Ethnicity  
On a 500 Point Scale**

| <b>Ethnicity</b>                  | <b>Average Scores</b> |             |             |
|-----------------------------------|-----------------------|-------------|-------------|
|                                   | <b>1992</b>           | <b>2005</b> | <b>2009</b> |
| White                             | 297                   | 293         | 296         |
| Black                             | 273                   | 267         | 269         |
| Hispanic                          | 279                   | 272         | 274         |
| Asian/Pacific<br>Islander         | 290                   | 287         | 298         |
| American Indian/<br>Alaska Native | 274 (1994)            | 279         | 283         |

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), 2009 Reading Assessment

**Studies of Achievement Gap Practices and Programs**

Using a modified theoretical framework model from Clark and Estes (2002), a study by Gray (2010) identified cultural norms, practices, and programs that have contributed to closing the achievement gap while sustaining success for more than three years for minority students at an urban elementary school in California. The student population was 80% Hispanic with more than 74% of the students classified as



socioeconomically disadvantaged. The theoretical model used six steps to analyze outcomes:

1. Identify a high achieving school.
2. Identify student subgroup performance.
3. Identify achievement goals and subgroup performance on the Academic Performance Index (API).
4. Identify factors contributing to growth.
5. Identify cultural norms, practices, and programs/school structure.
6. Analyze and synthesize results.

The study found the cultural norms, programs, and practices contributing to closing the achievement gap at Crestline Elementary School were caused by collaboration between staff members, shared leadership, a program for differentiated instruction, and a small group intervention model for language arts and mathematics that enabled teachers to assist or challenge students in flexible, skill-based groups.

The study also revealed that because of the cultural norms, programs, and practices, Crestline experienced an increase in their Academic Performance Index (API) score. API is a numerical value ranging from 200 to 1000 set by the state of California, with 800 set as the target for all schools. Any school that does not reach the 800 target must demonstrate an upward growth of 5% of all students in every subgroup from year to year (Gray, 2010, p. 29). In 2009, this elementary school had an API of 804, up from 751 in 2006. Within the last 12 years, the school has increased its API score by 204 points. The school attributes its success to a culture of collaboration, shared leadership, and

highly effective instructional practices. None of these practices are particularly new, but the combination was innovative in this context.

A similar study by Flores (2010), again in California, also found shared leadership crucial to academic success as she examined cultural norms, practices, and programs that improved student achievement at a high-poverty, high-performing urban middle school (grades 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup>, and 8<sup>th</sup>) with a 31% population of English Learner (EL) students located in a large Hispanic community. The study examined the school culture, practices, and programs that had demonstrated growth for three consecutive years. Four theoretical frameworks were examined in the study: social justice theory, critical race theory, sociocultural theory, and social capital theory. The cultural norms identified as contributing to the success of academic achievement were commitment to inclusion, equity in opportunity, access to exceptional education, and great expectations for all students, college-oriented goals, and personal accountability. The practices that allowed the school to achieve and sustain success were systemic instructional practices, data-driven practices, and systemic student support services and shared leadership. Programs that contributed to the academic success included tutoring and classroom instruction.

As a result of these practices, in the last three years student achievement has improved by 67 API points. EL achievement has increased by 69 points. In 2009, the school was designated as Distinguished because for two previous consecutive years it had met state and federal targets.

Cabrera (2010) examined factors that contributed to sustained academic success at an urban high school for more than five years. The school population was predominantly

Hispanic and socioeconomically disadvantaged. Through a modified theoretical framework of Clark and Estes (2002), Cabrera confirmed that leadership support and shared leadership contributed to reducing the achievement gap at this high school. The cultural norms and practices also included data-driven decision- making, positive affirmations, collaboration, academic rigor, learning assessment, leadership support, and making student needs a priority.

Programs that made a difference were the Educator's Assessment Data Management System (EADMS) and Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID) conferences. EADMS allows the school to assess and analyze data. AVID is a program designed to improve college readiness for students by offering tutoring and support services to help them reach their educational goals. Teachers also used AVID conferences as an opportunity to teach and learn from each other.

Through the cultural norms and practices implemented, between 2004 and 2008 this high school increased its API from 609 to 716. Hispanic groups have continuously improved since 2005, increasing their API by 43 points. This attainment has narrowed the achievement gap between Hispanics and their White counterparts to 47 points, down from 84 points in 2005 (Cabrera, 2010). The author credits the sustained success of this school to leadership support, shared leadership, cultural norms, practices, and programs, collaboration and data-driven decision making.

### **Achieving the Dream: Achieving Outcomes**

In 2004, to address the achievement gap and help disadvantaged students in community colleges succeed in their course work, Lumina Foundation initiated

Achieving the Dream (AtD). AtD expects to achieve outcomes through four means.

**Institutional change.** The AtD campus network (AtD coaches, data facilitators, supporting organizations) collaborates with leadership teams to create a sustainable broad based, systemic commitment to improving student outcomes by building a culture of evidence.

**Knowledge development.** AtD gathers data and strategy information from each college and state in order to assess change efforts. AtD disseminates learning by hosting events and publishing findings.

**Policy.** AtD state led institutions work to develop educational policies that promote innovation; reward colleges for increasing student completions; and to align secondary education and higher education college readiness standards, assessments, and placement policies.

**Public engagement.** Agents of influence have an opportunity to assess and advance AtD efforts. Supportive internal and external stakeholders influence and persuade institutions and policy-makers to improve student success (AtD, 2005a).

Achieving the Dream seeks to increase student success through equity. Structural inequities in society have created barriers to student success and achievement gaps between certain groups of students. AtD believes that equality alone will not remove these barriers, but coupled with equitable practices and policies for all groups, achievement gaps will be reduced (AtD, 2010d). Equity is achieved through education. Without a postsecondary education, job prospects and a good quality of life are limited. The workforce today requires more than the minimal skills acquired through high school.

Equity in higher education is comprised of three parts: equity in college preparation, access to college, and success in reaching college goals (Bailey & Morest, 2006, p. 2). Inequity exists because of several factors according to Bailey and Morest. First, many minority and low-income students do not have access to quality high schools that would prepare them for postsecondary education, making them less likely to enroll in college. Secondly, once these students are in college, they take fewer credits and are less likely to finish (Bailey & Morest, 2006).

Achieving the Dream exposes inequity by building a culture of evidence. A culture of evidence is an “environment where institutional and individual reflection and action are typically prompted and supported by data about student learning and institutional performance” (McClenney & McClenney, 2003, p. 3). A culture of evidence assumes that student learning can be improved if data are collected and examined. Morest asserts that many colleges already collect and analyze data in certain areas. The problem, according to Morest (2009), is not an absence of data collection, but the focus of data collection and methodologies. Morest adds that when higher education uses data, it is not always clear which decisions should or should not be based on empirical evidence or what evidence is acceptable. Oftentimes, institutional research is required to satisfy compliance reporting. Much of this reporting is not intended to satisfy internal functions, but to satisfy external stakeholders such as accreditors, policymakers and legislators. Morest believes in order to create a culture of evidence, there must be a systemic change. Key players from all levels within the organization must collect and use data to inform

their functions. Critically, in order to develop a culture of evidence, the evidence must be viewed as meaningful (Morest, 2009).

A culture of evidence is needed to reduce the number of students enrolling in developmental education. According to McCabe (2000), 41% of beginning community college students and 29% of four-year college students enroll in at least one developmental education course such as reading, writing, or math, which translates to a million underprepared students enrolling in college before they are college-ready. Of these million students, 20% are deficient in reading, 25% are deficient in writing, and 34% are deficient in math. The overall demographics of the students are 60% White, 23% Black, and 12% Hispanic. Forty percent receive some form of financial aid and the family income for the majority of this group is less than \$20,000 (McCabe, 2000, p.4).

AtD has specific approaches to improve outcomes for students testing into developmental education. Their strategies include defining and aligning college readiness standards, assessment and placement, implementing and evaluating program innovation, and performance measurement and incentives (AtD, 2009b). The priority of states must be to reduce the need for developmental education by assuring that students are college ready before beginning their college experience. In some AtD states, opportunities such as dual enrollment and early college high schools are used as strategies to prepare students for college and reduce the need for developmental education. Previously these opportunities existed only for students classified as gifted and talented. Today more colleges are using these opportunities as strategies to help disadvantaged students succeed in college (AtD, 2009b).

Achieving the Dream colleges commit to analyzing data closely to determine if students are remaining in school, completing developmental courses and progressing to credit-bearing courses. The institutions also agree to disaggregate and analyze their data to determine if groups of students are advancing at the same rate or whether there are gaps in achievement among certain populations, such as minority or low-income students. There are three stages in the process of improving student outcomes:

**Diagnosis and planning.** In this stage, colleges collect and analyze data to check students' progress while identifying achievement gaps for particular groups.

**Implementation and evaluation.** This stage involves the implementation of strategies to improve student performance.

**Institutionalization.** In this systemic stage, colleges adopt and expand effective practices (AtD, 2007).

In order for any initiative to be effective at an institution, the leadership must demonstrate commitment to the process, which is one of the core principles of AtD. Through their commitment, leaders are able to influence the culture and climate of the college.

### **Core Principles of Achieving the Dream**

Achieving the Dream is founded on four core principles: committed leadership, use of evidence to improve programs and services, broad engagement, and systemic institutional improvement (AtD, 2005d).

#### **Committed leadership.**

The first principle of AtD is committed leadership. Achieving the Dream defines committed leaders as those who are willing to make the necessary changes in policy and

practice and are committed to investing the resources to improve learning and completion for all students, simultaneously achieving equity in student outcomes across all racial boundaries and income groups (AtD, 2005d). Community college leaders must transcend the mentality of being concerned only with enrollment numbers and become the great leaders that students deserve by becoming more concerned with student success and equity. According to Collins (2001), great leaders exhibit certain characteristics: they realize that there is no greater asset than their people, are not discouraged by adversity, and believe one should strive to be the best at what one does. Being a committed leader requires sacrifice for the greater good. According to Gardner (1990), commitment requires hard work “in the heat of the day”; it requires faithful exertion on behalf of chosen purposes and the enhancement of chosen values (p. 190).

#### **Use of evidence to improve policies, programs, and services.**

Principle two is using evidence found through institutional research to improve policies, programs, and services. Institutional research (IR) within higher education, according to Saupe (1990), is to provide information that supports institutional planning, policy formation and decision-making (p. 1). To create a culture of evidence using institutional research, AtD places emphasis on two types of data analysis: longitudinal analysis and college completion (CCRC, 2008, p. 1). The longitudinal data collected on students includes courses taken, grades, and programs completed. The process includes analyzing the remedial and college-level courses taken by each cohort of students, followed by disaggregating and analyzing the findings to determine if there are gaps in achievement among certain student groups, such as part-time or students of color (Morest



& Jenkins, 2007). This type of analysis assists colleges in tracking student progress over time while identifying areas where some students tend to struggle or drop out of college. This allows the colleges to develop strategies to improve student progress based on a clear diagnosis of the challenges (Morest & Jenkins, 2007).

Though 160 colleges have committed to using data based decision making to create a culture of success (AtD, 2011a), most lack the capacity and staff to conduct the type of research AtD requires. Many colleges currently use their IR departments for regulatory compliance. Because of accountability pressures from federal, state, and accrediting agencies, colleges have to provide more data demonstrating evidence of student outcomes and institutional performance. Colleges need better data to guide decisions on college management and program design and services (Morest, 2009; Morest & Jenkins, 2007). AtD participants have found transforming their IR departments very challenging because it takes time to establish an institutionalized data-driven culture (Morest & Jenkins, 2007).

Some colleges have student information systems that are designed primarily to serve student recordkeeping purposes and other management functions (Morest & Jenkins, 2007; Morest, 2009; Saupe, 1990). A problem with student information systems is that student data is entered by different departments and sometimes by work-study students. If the data is used for research, it must be crosschecked to identify and correct errors. Most colleges do not have this capability. Some colleges combine research, planning, institutional effectiveness and assessment in one department (Morest & Jenkins, 2007; Morest, 2009). Others campuses may not have a formal research office

(Saupe, 1990). In addition, the data collection system for many colleges lacks the ability to clean or extract data once it has been entered in the system. An easy-to-use data collection and analysis system is needed for the type of research that could inform improvements to programs and institutional performance (Morest & Jenkins, 2007, p. 3).

Building a culture of evidence requires the Chief Executive Officers, administrators, faculty, and student services staff to understand how to use data in order to understand where students are having problems, create strategies to address problems, and assess the effectiveness of the solutions implemented (Morest & Jenkins, 2007, p. 2). Commitment and support from the leadership is imperative to establish a culture of evidence on any campus. The leadership must commit to investing not only the necessary resources to increase their IR capacity, but they must also create an atmosphere where the research is valued and viewed as both beneficial and priority (Morest, 2009; Morest & Jenkins, 2007). “Achieving the Dream recognizes the need for organizational transformation in creating such a climate and calls for college leaders to help nurture a culture of evidence (Morest & Jenkins, 2007, p. 4).

### **Broad engagement.**

The third principle of Achieving the Dream is broad engagement, which refers to collaboration among all stakeholders at the institution, including administrators, faculty, and student services staff to increase student achievement and outcomes. According to Tinto (1993), institutional commitment to success is critical in improving rates of student success over time. Without it, most efforts at improvement are marginal and short-lived

(p. 12). Faculty must be involved early and authentically in the change process. Their support will come most readily when they share responsibility for diagnosing the problems and crafting solutions (AtD, 2009c). Colleges that are more successful in engaging faculty make faster progress in their success agenda.

There has been limited research on broad engagement. Most research on engagement has focused primarily on faculty-student relationships, suggesting that when faculty engages students, student learning, retention and a quality undergraduate experience will occur (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991; Tinto, 1993; Astin, 1993). In Tinto's model, the decision of students to persist or withdraw from college depends on their successful academic social integration within the college.

Broad engagement requires a culture change within the colleges. Some stakeholders have found it difficult to accept broad engagement. AtD has experienced difficulty breaking down silos that exist among academic departments and across different campuses. Even though faculty supports the goal of student success, many feel that the problems have more to do with the students than with them or the college. Secondly, some are uncomfortable with the special focus on minority and low-income students. Sadly, there are also those who believe that substantial improvements in student outcomes are only possible by lowering standards of quality, which suggests the current level of achievement of students is the highest they can attain (AtD, 2009c).

Achieving the Dream recommends the involvement of faculty in the following strategies to increase broad engagement: (a) participating on core and data teams and task forces, (b) providing leadership as co-directors and coordinator, (c) serving as student

advocates, advisors, success coaches, and mentors, (d) working in collaborative groups delegated to redesign courses, curricula, and assessments, (e) participating in faculty retreats to discuss and analyze AtD data, (f) attending the AtD Kickoff and Strategy Institute, (g) participating in focus groups, stakeholder dialogues, and campus and community wide conversations on student success, and (h) attending convocations on AtD and student success and participating in faculty development experiences linked to strategic improvements in student success (AtD, 2009c).

### **Systemic institutional improvement.**

The fourth principle of Achieving the Dream is systemic institutional improvement designed to improve student success efforts within the entire organization. It begins with the strategic planning process. Strategic planning, according to Dooris, Kelley, and Trainer (2002), is the ability to formulate goals and proceed toward them with direct intent (p.5). In the early 1900's, Frenchman Henri Fayol (Dooris et al., 2002) described strategic planning as assessing the future, setting goals, and devising ways to bring about these goals (p.5). The first documented account of higher education's participation in strategic planning was in 1959 at a summer program hosted at Massachusetts Institute of Technology. To support rapid expansion, the original focus of strategic planning in higher education centered on facilities and accommodation planning.

Today in higher education, strategic planning has broadened to include hiring better faculty, recruiting stronger students, upgrading facilities, strengthening academic programs and student services, and acquiring the resources needed to accomplish those

goals. Dooris, et al. add that strategic planning also includes learning and creativity, encompassing the need for college and university leaders to challenge assumptions and consider radically changing existing structures and processes. Critics argue that strategic planning traditionally has focused too heavily on the process of developing a plan rather than on implementation or outcomes of the plan (Trainer, 2004)

### **Achieving the Dream's Strategic Planning Process**

In contrast to most strategic planning processes, AtD's process relies on data to establish and measure goals for student success. Plans for a given year are driven by a concise set of strategic priorities that focus on student success. Unlike other strategic plans that simply set and measure goal attainment, AtD colleges' budget decisions are based on evidence of program effectiveness and linked to plans to increase student success rates. Another aspect that differentiates the strategic planning process of AtD colleges from others is the integration of the student success agenda with accreditation activity to allow a much simpler process for institutions to retrieve accreditation data. Finally, a very important and unique component of the planning process is that faculty and staff members are trained on how to use and research data to improve programs and services (AtD, 2007). AtD strives to create lasting change while improving student outcomes through plans, processes, and strategies. Strategic planning is intricately linked to the leadership of the organization. All leaders are not the same; different leaders adopt and embrace different approaches to achieve their goals.

## **Achieving the Dream Leadership Approaches**

### **Transformational leadership.**

Transformational leadership was an impetus for the development of Achieving the Dream (CCRC, 2007). AtD leaders accept the responsibility of not only governing, but also being active participants in the process of creating change and sustainability to improve student success.

The emergence of transformational leadership was influenced by the chaos of the late 1970s and 1980s when the norm was represented by constant change (Bass, 1985; Burns, 1978; Ticky & Devanna, 1986). Burns (1978) developed transformational leadership based on Weber's 1947 work on charismatic leaders. Weber (1947) described charismatic leaders as having exceptional traits and qualities that are supernatural and superhuman with the magical power to inspire others. Burns (1978) qualified leadership traits as moral and amoral. He considered moral leaders as those who reflected the aspirations and needs of their followers. He described amoral leaders as being coercive and manipulative, often exhibiting the need to exert power. According to Burns (1978), transformational leadership occurs when people engage each other in a way to raise one another to higher levels of motivation and morality. In their best form, transformational leaders interact with and engage individuals while inspiring full potential, resulting in a transformation of both the leader and follower (Burns, 1978). Their purposes may start out separated but become linked together for a common cause. Antonakis, Avolia, and Sivasubramaniam (2003) argue that in addition to raising followers to higher levels of awareness, transformational leadership is also comprised of five characteristics: (a)

idealized influence (attributes) - whether the leader is admired and perceived as capable or powerful; (b) idealized influence (behavior) - how values and beliefs are demonstrated by leader's behavior; (c) inspirational motivation - how leaders motivate and inspire followers; (d) intellectual stimulation-the ability of the leader to challenge followers to be innovative and creative thinkers; and (e) individualized consideration - how the leader gives individualized attention to followers by actively developing their potential through advising and support.

The transformational leader, according to Bass and Bass (2008), identifies critical problems, recommends possible solutions, and creates opportunities to resolve them. Bass (1990) expanded Burn's study of transformational leadership and describes transformational leaders as superior and charismatic leaders who develop the interests of those in their organizations while meeting their emotional needs. The transformational leader provides personal attention, coaches, and communicates high expectations to individuals within the organization. Bass and Bass (2008) suggest that leaders aspire to be sensitive, democratic, fair, committed, confident and self-assured.

Bass (1990) believes transformational leadership can be learned and asserts transformational leadership should be encouraged because it embodies a positive influence at all levels of performance. The transformational leader inspires positive change. In effect, the root word of transformational is transform, which means to change. According to previous works by Wallin, (2010); Beach, (2006); and Drucker, (1999), change is an essential component of leadership.

### **Change leadership.**

Internal and external forces mandate constant change for community colleges.

Change leadership is relevant to leadership today because it describes the types of changes community college leaders need to make to grow while producing positive changes in student success. Change leadership is defined as “the art of producing appropriate changes in an organization’s external environment, its functions and structure, its culture, and its practices in pursuit of survival and prosperity” (Beach, 2006, p. ix). Change leadership also embodies similar tenets of transformational leadership by suggesting leaders must become change leaders who

remove barriers and free people to use their strengths to improve the organization, make it responsive to the community and to regional and national needs, and look with fresh vision on the landscape that has become the field of labor for community colleges. (Wallin, 2010, p. 5)

In addition, change leadership encompasses four other useful leadership tenets.

Change leaders (a) anticipate; (b) constantly analyze the environment; (c) take action; and (d) affirm changes that need to be made (Wallin, 2010, p. 8). These characteristics will assist community college leaders embrace change to improve student outcomes.

In contrast to Beach’s (2006) definition of change leadership as an art, Drucker (1999) described change leaders as opportunists because they seek out change, know how to differentiate appropriate changes and how to make them purposeful and effective internally and externally. However, becoming this type of leader is not a simple task, but requires assessing and abandoning current policies that are no longer productive, incorporating a systemic policy of innovation to create change, understanding how to



introduce change to the organization internally and externally, and implementing policies that ensure balance and continuity during change (Drucker, 1999).

A study by Ninni (2010) examined the role and influence of three elementary school principals as change agents in a school reform initiative and found change agent characteristics similar to previous works of Wallin (2010), Beach (2006), and Drucker (1999). Her study found the principals demonstrated traits of change agents by providing vision and modeling appropriate behavior as they led by example, welcomed input from faculty, and anticipated the effects of change on their work. The principals also had high expectations and challenged the faculty to reexamine their commitment to students. They also fostered a commitment to achieving goals while encouraging faculty to work collaboratively. In addition, the principals provided support and resources for professional development training and other needs.

Ninni (2010) maintains that in order to be an effective change agent, it is imperative to be knowledgeable about organizational change. Understanding the change process is demonstrated by (a) devoting time to change (b) engaging others in a moral purpose, (c) being a visionary leader, (d) establishing learning communities, (e) using data to make decisions, (f) promoting high standards, (g) reallocating resources, and (h) creating consensus among faculty and community members (Ninni, 2010, p. 10).

Change is not easy and is often resisted by many within an organization. Leaders must learn how to manage constituents who are resistant to change. According to O'Toole (1996), "Everybody resists change, particularly the people who have to do the most changing" (p.13). O'Toole maintains that the greatest source of resistance is human

nature's objection to having someone else's will forced on us. Similarly, Kotter (1996) affirms, "whenever human communities are forced to adjust to shifting conditions, pain is ever present" (p. 4). Higher education has a reputation for being resistant to change and is ridiculed by other professional domains because of its slow process of change (Davis, 2003). Reasons for resistance to change noted by Kezar (2001) and others include: (a) too many power structures that confuse the line of authority, (b) organizational structures tend to support more spontaneous solutions than planned, purposeful change, and (c) duality of values between professionals and administrators make collaboration on change difficult (pp. 65-77). The lack of planned change is referred to as revolutionary change (Davis, 2003; Schein, 2004). Not only is there potential for resistance to change, sometimes change simply fails. O'Toole (1996) alleges "when change fails to occur as planned, the cause is almost always found at a deeper level, rooted in inappropriate behaviors, beliefs, attitudes, and assumptions of would-be-leaders" (p. x).

Kotter (1996) went a step further by identifying common errors that prevent organizational change which were (a) unbridled complacency; (b) lack of support from the top management; (c) undervaluing the strength of the vision; (d) ineffective communication regarding the vision; (e) allowing hindrances to obstruct the new vision; (f) unwillingness to celebrate small victories; (g) alleging victory prematurely; and (h) failure to ingrain changes in the organization's culture. Leaders must seek out and destroy barriers, whether real or imagined that impede the vision. Kotter warns, "One well placed blocker can stop an entire change effort" (1996, p. 10). Real change takes time. People should be acknowledged for their continued efforts. They need to see proof along the way

of reaching ultimate change or they will likely retract support. Celebrating progress is good, but a premature declaration of completion could cause a major setback. Once people believe the task is completed, it is difficult to re-rally and re-motivate the troops. Changes should be completely saturated and assimilated into the cultural norms because innovations require time to take root or they will quickly die. People must be made aware of the importance of specific behaviors and attitudes that contribute to the organization's success. Also, good succession planning is needed to ensure the sustainability of the change through the next generation of leaders (Kotter, 1996). Previous assumptions should also be tested to make sure everyone understands expectations. Most importantly, everyone within the organization from all levels should pledge and commit to change (Diamond, 2005).

According to Diamond (2005), solutions to challenges being faced today by institutions of higher education will require major academic reform and organizational change. Successful change requires creating and implanting new institutional practices and processes that achieve the vision of the organization (Boyce 2003). Institutional change includes changes in institutional achievement, outcome attainment, and values (Boyce, 2003). Institutional change is sustained by examining and communicating, learning from one's own actions, and assimilating and embedding changes systemically. Change can be described as first order or second order change. First order change uses current knowledge to achieve goals. In contrast to first order change, second order change is transformational and permanent, requiring modifications in assumptions and beliefs and ideals of the organization. Institutionalism refers to the long-term endurance and

assimilation of a new program within an organization or sustaining the use of an innovation (Johnson, Hays, Center & Daley, 2004; Sherry, 2003). Institutional change is replacing the old production model with a new one (Loomis & Rodriguez, 2009, p. 478).

Higher education is going through significant changes stimulated by the rapid growth of the Internet, the increasing globalization of higher education, and the ever-pressing question of institutional quality. New modes of educational delivery through virtual networks are breaking the traditional mold of instructional provision. New players, new pedagogies, and new paradigms are redefining higher education. The rules are changing, and there is increased pressure on institutions of higher education to evolve, adapt, or desist (Swail, 2002, p. 16).

“Trying to change an educational system is like trying to move a cemetery: there’s not a lot of internal support for it” (Anonymous, n.d.). Achieving change as cited by Diamond (2005), requires a clear vision and mission statement, goals that demonstrate the institution’s support, an illustration by the institution of student centeredness, institution-wide change, rewards, professional development, and data-based decision making. Diamond (2005) and Boyce (2003) went a step further by asserting that achieving organizational change in higher education requires innovation in institutional practices and policies.

### **Innovation in Education**

Innovation in education is defined by Westera (2004) as a diverse and complex mix of new developments in pedagogy and technology that imply changes at the organizational level and in human functioning, touching on concepts like progress, change, control, functionality, mediation, and acceptance (p. 502). Change encompasses transforming the form or capacity of a person, thing, or system (Sherry, 2003). Systemic change requires resources in the form of people, money, supplies, facilities, and time to

learn and experiment (Sherry, 2003, p. 217). “The personal-best leadership cases continue to be about radical departures from the past, about doing things that have never been done before, and about going to places not yet discovered” (Kouzes & Posner, 2007, p. 163). Leaders embrace and seek out innovation. According to Rogers (1995), the innovation decision process encompasses five steps from the introduction of the innovation to confirmation that include knowledge (learning of the innovation’s existence and use), persuasion (developing an attitude about the innovation), decision (participating in activities that inform the decision to accept or reject the innovation), implementation (using the innovation), and confirmation (evaluating the results of the decision).

Rogers’ model also emphasized that innovation adoption depended on the individual’s perception of whether the innovation is advantageous and recognized as beneficial. It should be compatible with existing values and needs of the individuals. Finally, the results must clearly be visible to others to ensure its adoption.

To help promote awareness of the innovation and encourage its use, leaders as change agents distribute and disseminate information about it through various incentives. Systemic change is also a slow process. After the systemic change is assimilated, it must be sustained.

### **Sustainability**

A crucial aspect of innovation success is sustainability. Sustainability is a process in which an innovation is maintained through the execution of specific steps intended to improve the organization’s infrastructure. AtD Leader colleges must demonstrate that the achieved student success has been sustained for at least three years (AtD, 2010b). Two

main tenets of sustainability are adaptability and flexibility (Johnson, et al., 2004). Sabelli and Dede (2001) affirm that a sustainability system must be adaptive and flexible enough to incorporate larger and more diverse contexts or risk losing opportunities to improve learning and the educational system.

Using organizational change theory, a study by Raemer (2000) examined sustainability of an organizational change in its fifth year at an elementary school. Raemer found the sustainability of the innovation for this school depended on (a) training and development of teachers in the innovation, (b) collaboration among teachers, (c) belief in and practice of the innovation by the principal, (d) the ease to incorporate the innovation, and (e) institution-wide support.

#### **Inhibitors to sustainability.**

According to Braganza, Awazu, and Desouza (2009), certain patterns of behavior can interrupt the progress of sustainability and should be removed expediently. Braganza et al. suggest that as organizations mature, it is a natural process to become comfortable with the norm. However, once they lose their innovative spirit (the very characteristic that made them successful), diminished risk-taking and creativity soon follow. The sustainability inhibitors identified by Braganza et al. are the pursuit of stability, risk avoidance, lack of options, and complex power structures. Stability should not be at the expense of student success. The student population at community colleges has become very diverse and with diversity has come new challenges. Community college leaders must acknowledge when changes are needed that will sustain the mission of the college and create opportunities to improve learning outcomes for students. Avoiding risk can

also mean avoiding growth. What worked in the past may not necessarily work today or may require modification. Community colleges have two options, either continue operating as usual with the same minimal results, or adopt an initiative such as Achieving the Dream to improve the equity gap and retention and completion rates. Limited resources should not inhibit growth. Community colleges must take advantage of internal resources such as faculty and staff while being open to suggestions and recommendations to garner constituent support and collaboration. Broad engagement is an integral part of AtD. Leaders must remain focused on the college's mission to avoid becoming entangled in political power structures. They should be able to anticipate disputes and disagreements regarding new initiatives (Braganza, et al., 2009).

#### **Removing inhibitors to sustainability.**

In order to remove inhibitors, Braganza et al. (2009) recommend three strategies. First, leaders should convey the value of the new initiative or program by explaining to the organization why it is important to adopt the innovation. Next, they should remind constituents of the mission of the college. Finally, leaders should allow others an opportunity to share ownership in decision-making and completing tasks. Adopting an innovation should include a theoretical framework that describes how the institutional change will unfold.

#### **Summary**

This chapter offered a review of the following themes: the achievement gap in the United States, Achieving the Dream principles and processes, various leadership approaches, educational innovation, and sustainability. These themes are all necessary

components that led to the type of student success that has been demonstrated by the institutions and leaders in the study. The next chapter will discuss the methodology to be used for the research.



## **CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY**

### **Introduction**

The purpose of this study was to examine leadership practices used to increase student success through sustaining innovation at two Achieving the Dream Leader Colleges. This research focused on the leadership practices of the Chief Executive Officers, Board of Trustees, Leadership Teams, and faculty that led to improved student success at two community colleges.

In this chapter, the researcher described the methodological approach and research design. Additionally, a description of participants, the sample selection, instrumentation, data collection and procedures, and data analysis are discussed.

The research design includes the description of the methodology used in this study, the relevance of the methodology, and its strengths and weaknesses. The sample selection describes the goals of purposeful sampling with a description of the participants in the study. Instrumentation includes the type of study conducted and the criteria of participants selected for the study. Data collection and procedures include a description of the data collection instruments and steps on how they were used for data collection. Data analysis includes the qualitative analysis aspect of the study including: coding, reliability, respondent validation, triangulation, member check, and clarifying bias.

This research was a multiple case study that examined leadership practices used to increase student success through sustained innovations at two Achieving the Dream Leader Colleges. The study sought the perspectives of Achieving the Dream coaches about leadership practices that increased student success while also examining obstacles

that were present during innovation sustainability at the two Achieving the Dream Leader Colleges. The study attempted to answer the following three research questions:

1. What leadership practices were employed by the following to sustain innovation that led to increased student success?
  - A. The Chief Executive Officer
  - B. The Board of Trustees
  - C. The Leadership Team
  - D. The Faculty
2. What was the perception of the Achieving the Dream Coach and Data Facilitator regarding the leadership practices that led to increased student success?
3. What obstacles to change were encountered by stakeholders during innovation sustainability?

## **Research Design**

### **Qualitative Research.**

The research used for this study was of a qualitative design. Qualitative research is based on the philosophical study called phenomenology, which focuses on someone's experience from his or her own perspective (Roberts, 2004). The research does not begin with specific questions, but with broad general questions about whatever is being investigated. Qualitative studies tend to collect data in the field at the location where participants experience the phenomenon or problem being studied (Creswell, 2009; Roberts, 2004). Qualitative designs are not usually used to test theory, but the theory will emerge when the data has been collected. The framework may change as the research

evolves. Adopting a tentative conceptual framework allows the researcher to focus and bound the study with regard to whom and what will and will not be studied (Rudestam & Newton, 2007, p. 46). Qualitative research involves sensitive interviewing found in naturalistic studies where the researcher enters the participant's world without a preexisting agenda. The qualitative researcher must understand that they bring their own values, assumptions, and expectations to the study that can be difficult to detach at times. Qualitative data may consist of detailed descriptions of events, situations, behaviors, and direct quotations from people about their experiences and beliefs (Rudestam & Newton, 2007). Creswell (2009) also suggests characteristics of qualitative studies including:

- Natural setting- Qualitative researchers normally collect information at the location where the participants explore the subject or topic being studied.
- Researchers as key instrument- Qualitative researchers collect the data themselves by researching documents, observing behavior, or interviewing participants. Even though they may use an apparatus for collecting the data, it is the researcher himself who actually gathers the data. They do not usually depend on questionnaires or surveys developed by other researchers.
- Multiple source of data- Qualitative researchers do not rely on one source of data, but usually collect data from different multiple sources such as interviews, observations, and documents.
- Inductive data analysis- Qualitative researchers create themes from the information obtained. They organize the data and work back and forth between the themes and the core data until they have solid themes.

- Participant's meanings-The qualitative researcher remains focused during the research process to learn the meaning of the participant's story, not the researcher's issue or problem.
- Emergent design- In qualitative research the process for collecting data may change and the questions could change. Sometimes this occurs after the researcher has begun the data collection phase.
- Theoretical lens-Qualitative researchers view their research through the lens of the culture or phenomenon they are studying. The lens could involve race, gender, social class, or political view.
- Interpretive- Qualitative researchers interpret what they see, hear, and understand. Their interpretations are related to their own backgrounds, history, and understanding.
- Holistic account-Qualitative researchers try to report multiple perspectives of an issue and dissect them until a central theme emerges. In qualitative research because both the researcher and participant interpret, their observations may lead to multiple views of the problem. (Creswell, 2009)

Qualitative research studies are used to understand some social phenomena from the perspective of those involved, to contextualize issues in their particular socio-cultural-political milieu, and sometimes to transform or change social conditions (Glesne, 2006, p. 4). Qualitative researchers seek to understand and interpret how the various participants in a social setting construct the world around them. According to Roberts (2004), qualitative research may focus on organizational processes (p.111). Roberts (2004)

suggests this means that qualitative researchers look at the crucial nature of something and not how much or how many of something. Nothing is done to manipulate the environment; it's a natural real world setting. Qualitative researchers also may collaborate with the participants to give the participants a change to shape the themes that emerge from the process.

### **Multiple Case Study.**

The probing nature of qualitative research can elicit some very powerful and moving responses (Willis, 2007). Therefore, this study was conducted using a multiple case study design. A case study is a form of qualitative observation that studies a specific phenomenon such as a program, event, person, process, institution, or social group (Willis, 2007, p. 238). A case study as described by Creswell (2009) is a strategy of inquiry in which the researcher explores in detail a program, event, activity, process, or one or more individuals. Case studies are normally used with qualitative designs where there is a strong effort to understand a single unit of study in a complex context (Rudestam & Newton, 2007). In case studies, information is collected over time using a variety of data collection methods (p.13). Willis asserts that case studies also include specific characterizations such as they (a) focus on a specific context; (b) relate to real people and situations; (c) include broad comprehensive data from observations, interviews, and document sources; (d) depend on inductive reasoning; and (e) help clarify meaning about the study. According to Ritchie & Lewis (2006), the principal characteristic of a case study is that it offers multiple perspectives and is rooted in a particular context that is critical to understanding the phenomena being examined. The

study may involve one case, but usually involves multiple cases in applied research. The goal of case studies is to obtain an extensive understanding of the phenomenon being studied (Rudestam & Newton, 2007).

In case studies, according to Willis (2007), interviews become the primary source of data collected. Interviews may be very structured or semi-structured. Most interviews being conducted today are structured, providing a list of questions from which the participant selects answers. Willis adds that even though interviewing seems very easy, it is actually tough to collect good interview data; “it takes practice and effort” (2007. p. 247). Glesne (2006) describes the interviewing process as a complex act (p. 91). Glesne (2006) also suggests interview attributes to help with the interview process. The good interview is: (a) anticipatory-looking ahead and planning what to say or what materials or equipment to bring; (b) trusting- setting aside assumptions about what the interviewees mean, not second guessing them based on the interviewer’s expertise in the subject; (c) analytic –the part of the interview process of considering relationships, meanings, and explanations that will help with the analysis of the study; and (d) nondirective-learn about the interviewees’ beliefs, experiences, and views instead of trying to persuade them to accept your perspective. The interviewer does not let the respondents know his or her meanings and feelings because it might shape their responses. The respondents should be able to respond freely. The interviewer should patiently probe without rushing the respondent to get to the bottom of things (p.96).

## **Sample Selection and Description of Participants**

A purposeful sampling strategy was used for this study. Purposeful sampling possesses certain characteristics that enable detailed understanding of the themes the researcher wishes to study (Ritchie & Lewis, 2006, 78). Maxwell (2005) suggests that purposeful sampling has four goals:

1. To achieve representativeness of the settings, individuals or activities selected
2. To adequately capture the heterogeneity in the population
3. To deliberately examine cases that are critical for the themes
4. To establish particular comparisons to illustrate reasons for differences between settings and individuals (pp. 89-90).

This study required two levels of sample selection. The first level of sample selection was to identify the community colleges to be included in the study. The selection criteria were: colleges which have been participants of Achieving the Dream for at least four years, colleges that have been recognized as Achieving the Dream Leader Colleges after their fifth year, and colleges who have been recognized and singled out for documented reputational data about increased student success. The second level of sample selection was used to identify the individual participants from the different subgroups and the specific selection criteria for each group. The participants who were selected for the study were: Chief Executive Officers, Board of Trustees members, the Leadership Team, Faculty, and Coaches from Achieving the Dream.

### **Chief Executive Officer.**

The Chief Executive Officer from each institution was interviewed as part of this study. The Chief Executive Officer's role in Achieving the Dream is to actively commit to support student success efforts not just through increasing student enrollment, but also through developing strategies that will improve student performance. The Chief Executive Officer also demonstrates a willingness to support policy changes and reallocate resources to improve student success (AtD, 2009a). Both of the Chief Executive Officers had served at their respective institutions at least the first five years since joining Achieving the Dream.

### **Board of Trustees.**

There were between seven and twelve members on each Board of Trustees. The Board of Trustees commits to improving student outcomes by supporting the Chief Executive Officer and the leadership team in their efforts. They review regular reports on the institution's endeavors to improve student success rates across all student groups (AtD, 2009a). For this study, the researcher interviewed two board members, one from each college. Both board members had served on their respective boards during the first five years of Achieving the Dream at their institutions.

### **Leadership Team.**

The leadership team represented senior leaders who demonstrated a commitment to support changes in policies, practices, and resource allocation to improve student outcomes (AtD, 2009a). The researcher interviewed a total 14 participants from the



Leadership Teams from both colleges. Each participant had served on the team for at least five years since the institution became a member of Achieving the Dream.

**Faculty.**

The faculty is responsible for creating a culture of evidence by evaluating program outcomes and creating strategies to close achievement gaps between student groups AtD, 2009a). The researcher interviewed a total of 12 faculty members from both community colleges. All of the faculty members had been at their respective colleges for at least the first five years of the college's participation in Achieving the Dream.

**Coach and Data Facilitator.**

In order to assist the AtD colleges achieve student success, each college is assigned a coach and data facilitator. Two coaches and two data facilitators were interviewed for the study. All of the coaches and data facilitators were interviewed by telephone because they only visit the college campuses once a year now. The coach assists and supports the college in determining effective strategies to improve student success. The data facilitator helps the college in collecting and analyzing data. The goal of data collection and analysis is to build the function into the college's structure (AtD, 2009a).

After approval from the Institutional Research Board (IRB) at The University of Texas at Austin, the researcher contacted the IRB departments of the participating community colleges to request permission to conduct the study on their campuses through interviews, focus groups, and document reviews. After receiving permission from the participating colleges, the researcher requested assistance from the community

college President's assistants to obtain names of possible participants for the study. After receiving a list of names and emails from the President's assistants of both community colleges, the researcher contacted the possible participants by email to request a personal interview. At one college, the President's assistant scheduled all of the interviews and focus group for the researcher. The researcher did not receive a response from everyone that was contacted. The summer season proved to be problematic for some interviewees. However, with the assistance of the Presidents staff, enough interviews were scheduled to allow the researcher to begin the data collection process. The researcher scheduled the trip to visit the campuses. Participants were emailed a consent form prior to the interviews. The researcher also took consent forms to the sites during the data collection process.

### **Data Collection**

Data collection occurred using multiple qualitative research methods and techniques including interviews, conducting a focus group and document review. The researcher was only able to conduct one focus group because of scheduling conflicts at one of the colleges.

Data collection was conducted during the summer of 2011. Data collection and interviews took approximately three months. There were 33 participants in the study: two community college Presidents (Chief Executive Officers), two Boards of Trustees members (one from each college), fourteen administrators from the Leadership Team (nine from CC1, five from CC2), eleven faculty members, including the focus group (eight from CC1, three from CC2), two coaches and two data facilitators (one coach and

one data facilitator from each college). All of the participants met the criteria of having been at their respective community colleges for the five years leading up to becoming a Leader College.

### **Interviews.**

According to Glesne (2006), “your research questions formulate what you want to understand; your interview questions are what you ask people in order to gain that understanding” (p.81). Although there is a relationship between the research questions and the interview questions, interview questions are more specific than research questions (Glesne, 2006). Interviews have a specific purpose and the subject of discussion is mentioned in advance (Dyer, 1995). The participants signed the consent forms prior to the interviews. The researcher used an interview guide that she developed based on the research questions to conduct the interviews. Through the use of interviews, the researcher explored each individual’s understanding of leadership practices that were used to improve student outcomes. The coaches were interviewed over the phone. Some people from the Leadership team were also interviewed over the phone, because they had retired from the college. However, they had been instrumental in the success of Achieving the Dream efforts at the institution. Telephone interviewees either mailed or emailed their consent forms back to the researcher. All of the interviews were recorded, including the telephone interviews. Additionally, the researcher took notes by hand. The interviews lasted from thirty to sixty minutes. An experienced transcriber transcribed the interviews.

The participants were asked questions designed to gather data about their leadership practices that helped to improve student outcomes. They were also asked about the meaning of committed leadership and to describe any possible challenges they had experienced during the innovation sustainability of the practices. The following list includes a sample of questions that were asked during the interviews and focus group discussions.

1. What is/was your title/role at your institution as well as in Achieving the Dream?
2. How long were you involved with AtD?
3. How long have you been at your institution?
4. In your own words, define committed leadership.
5. What are some practices you employed to reduce the achievement gap and achieve equity between all groups of students? To what extent did you as leader influence outcomes?
6. What were the sustained innovations your college used to improve student success?
7. What were obstacles to change that you encountered during innovation sustainability?
8. What was your perception of the leadership practices that led to student success? (coaches only)

### **Focus Group.**

As previously stated, the focus group occurred at one community college, CC1. Even though the researcher contacted some of the focus group participants, the President's assistant finalized the focus group meeting and scheduled the participants. The focus group provided an opportunity for the researcher to observe how people think and share their ideas about leadership practices that led to student success. The focus group also provided an opportunity for participants to hear differences and similarities from each other's insights about practices that led to sustained student success (Ritchie & Lewis, 2006). The focus group was comprised of faculty only. After ensuring all of the participants signed the consent forms, the discussion began. In addition to the interview questions, the group discussed what the experience has been like to be a part of Achieving the Dream.

### **Document Review.**

Each college required document support. The researcher sought documents that included implementing practices, policy changes, organizational changes, procedural documents, communications to or from Achieving the Dream, or written communications within the organization to explain practices that led to sustained student success. Documents were reviewed for content and support in order to validate the accuracy of information gathered in interviews and focus group. Various types of documents were reviewed including the following documents for Community College One: Achieving the Dream Annual Narrative Report (2011) and the Annual Narrative & Financial Report (2010 and 2011), Leah Meyer Austin Student Success Leadership Award Application,

and the Office of Grants Management Annual Report (2010). Documents for Community College Two included: Annual Narrative & Financial Report (2009) and Achieving the Dream Annual Report Narrative (2011). The Annual Report Narrative is a report from the institution to Achieving the Dream that discusses their yearly progress with initiatives. The colleges answered questions about the following areas: implementation modifications, interventions discontinued, obstacles faced implementing interventions, evaluation of interventions, progress scale for interventions, professional development offered, policy changes, and greatest developmental education initiative accomplished during the year. The Annual Narrative & Financial Report requests information regarding progress in the four principles of Achieving the Dream: committed leadership; use of evidence to improve policies, programs, and services; broad engagement; and systemic institutional improvement; and information about the most recent budget for the institution.

Documents provided valuable information as they served as a source of (1) information about practices and initiatives being used at the institutions to improve student success, (2) information about the background of processes and (3) a source of deeper understanding of what was revealed in the study (Ritchie & Lewis, 2006). The documents corroborated statements from interviews about improved student success.

### **Coding Process and Data Analysis**

The data analysis was completed using a coding system. Coding is the main strategy for categorizing data in qualitative research (Maxwell, 2005). The goal of coding in qualitative research is not to count things as in quantitative research, but instead to

break up the data and categorize it to facilitate comparison between things in the same category and organize data into broader themes (Maxwell, 2005). Qualitative coding methods suggested by Glesne (2006) were used for this study. According to Glesne (2006), coding is a progressive process of sorting and defining and defining and sorting those scraps of collected data (p. 152). She suggested the following steps: (a) create an organizational framework by putting similar pieces together into data clumps; (b) develop major code clumps in order to sort the data; (c) then code the contents of each clump, breaking them down into sub codes; and (4) place the various data clumps into themes (p. 152). The researcher used all four steps to create codes and themes.

Qualitative studies require decisions about how the analysis will be conducted. The decision should inform the rest of the design (Maxwell, 2005). The analysis process involves making sense out of the data from what the researcher has seen, heard, and read (Creswell, 2009; Glesne, 2006). Analysis is incessant and repetitive to enable the researcher to manage the data and make sense of the evidence (Ritchie & Lewis, 2006; Creswell, 2000). It involves collecting open-ended data, based on asking general questions and developing an analysis from the information supplied by the participants (Creswell, 2009, p. 184).

The first step in analyzing data was to have the interviews transcribed. After reading through transcripts and field notes repetitively, the research questions and review of the literature were used to inform initial categories for the coding. From this process a list of emergent patterns that revealed relationships were recorded. Field notes and documents were also compared to develop categories related to the study. Groups of data

were labeled and highlighted in order to establish themes. The different groups were highlighted in different colors. In the next step, the researcher compared the groups of data and developed primary categories.

### **Reliability**

In order to determine reliability, the researcher should document the procedures for the case studies. Reliability is the degree to which the study can be duplicated (Roberts, 2004; Ritchie & Lewis, 2006). Creswell (2009) suggests qualitative researchers follow the steps below to ensure reliability:

- Check transcripts to make sure they do not contain mistakes.
- Make sure the definitions of the codes are understood.

The researcher used the steps from Creswell (2009) to ensure reliability.

### **Validity**

Validity of data refers to whether the data is correct or not (Ritchie & Lewis, 2006). Validity asks if the data can be trusted (Roberts, 2004). Validity is the strength of qualitative research and the findings depend on the viewpoints of the researcher, the participant, and the readers of the account. The researcher used respondent validation, triangulation, and member check to enhance validity and accuracy (Creswell, 2009). Using multiple sites for the research increased the trustworthiness of the themes (Glesne, 2006).

#### **Respondent validation.**

Respondent validation ensures that conversations are not misinterpreted. According to Maxwell (2005), respondent validation is the most important way to avoid



misinterpreting the meaning and perspective of what interviewees say. Validation involves seeking feedback from the participants about data and conclusions drawn from the discourses. The researcher reviewed transcripts to ensure validity.

### **Triangulation.**

Triangulation is the process of collecting information from multiple sources to reduce the risk of bias (Maxwell, 2005). The researcher used a combination of interviews, documentation reviews, and member checks to improve validity and reliability while reducing the risk of researcher bias.

### **Member check.**

Member check enhances validity by allowing the researcher to send the final report or themes back to the participant to determine accuracy. In this study, the researcher emailed the themes to the participants for their feedback.

### **Clarify bias.**

The researcher was very aware of her biases, but did not allow any bias to persuade or influence the interviews.

### **Summary**

The purpose of Chapter Three was to provide a detailed description of the design and procedures that were used to conduct the study. A qualitative research method was used to conduct interviews, review documents, and facilitate one focus group to allow the researcher to gain insight and an understanding of leadership practices employed to increase student success through sustaining innovation.

Chapter Four of this dissertation will report the profiles of the community colleges and the participants in this study. Findings and analysis will be discussed in Chapter Five.

## **CHAPTER FOUR: PARTICIPANTS PROFILES**

### **Introduction**

This multiple case research study investigated leadership practices used to increase student success through sustaining innovation at Achieving the Dream Leader Colleges. Chief Executive Officers, Boards of Trustees, Leadership Teams, Faculty, and AtD Coaches participated in the study.

This chapter includes a description of the colleges and participants as well as other demographic information about the county in which they are located. The demographic characteristics of each college are presented separately. The demographic data was gathered from the colleges and their websites, the U.S. Census, the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), and websites of the states in which each college is located.

### **Community College One**

Located in Texas, Community College One (CC1) serves more than 800,000 people, 13 school districts and 66 public, private, and charter high schools. It was established in 1969 when County citizens voted to create a junior college district. A board of seven trustees was elected to administer the College (CC1, 2010). In 1971, the Board of Trustees along with community citizens requested state funding to open the College. In that same year, the 62<sup>nd</sup> Texas Legislature dedicated funds to the College, allowing it to enroll 901 students in September of that year (CC1, 2010). The first classes

were held in fall 1972 in buildings leased from a U.S. Army base. This became the first campus for CC1. By fall of 1973, enrollment had grown to 5,041 students (CC1, 2010).

Through grant funds, the College purchased additional buildings near downtown and between 1974 and 1977 developed 12 programs in the disciplines of medicine and dentistry. The College continued to grow and expand rapidly, demonstrating the need for a community college in the area. Between 1977 and 1979, building construction had begun for two campuses. The next campus was completed in 1978 followed by the completion of the third campus in 1979. By 1981, enrollment had grown to 10,341 students. In 1990, facility expansion resulted in the construction of a new Student Services Center and Advanced Technology Building. By fall 1993, enrollment at Community College One had reached more than 19,000 credit and 7,500 non-credit students. Through the assistance of grant funds, the fourth campus was completed in 1994. Today, after completing their last campus in 1998, Community College One proudly boasts five campuses, enrolling approximately 40,000 credit and non-credit students [30,000 credit students] (CC1, 2010). The Commission on Colleges of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) accredits Community College One. The College offers over 130 degree and certificate programs in transfer and career technical fields, as well as non-credit and continuing education and professional development programs (CC1, 2010).

### **Community College One County Demographics**

Community College One is located in Texas. The county in which it is located is 1,012.7 square miles with a population of 800,647 people (Census, 2010). Since 2000,

the county population has grown by 17.8%. The dominant ethnic group represented is Hispanic at 82% of the population. The ethnic breakdown of the County is shown below in Table 4.

**Table 4**

**County Demographics for Community College One**

| <b>Ethnicity</b>                               | <b>County<br/>Percent</b> | <b>Texas<br/>Percent</b> |
|--|---------------------------|--------------------------|
| Hispanic or Latino                             | 82.0                      | 38.0                     |
| White (not Hispanic)                           | 13.0                      | 45.2                     |
| Black  | 3.1                       | 12.0                     |
| Asian  | 1.0                       | 4.0                      |
| American Indian and Alaskan Natives            | 0.8                       | 0.7                      |
| Native Hawaiian and<br>Other Pacific Islanders | 0.1                       | 0.1                      |

Source: Census, 2010

As of 2009, the County was comprised of 9.8% of people under the age of 5 years old, 31.4% of people under 18 years old, and 10.6% of people 65 years and older, with females representing 51.8% of the population, and males at 48.2% (Census, 2010). The census also revealed that between 2005-2009, 69.8% of persons over the age of 25 graduated from high school, and 18.8% earned a Bachelor's degree or higher. There were 234,366 households with an average of 3.06 persons per household. The median household income in 2009 was \$36,078 with 23.7% of people below the poverty line. The percent of persons under 18 years old in poverty was 32.7% (Census, 2010). Data showed that the unemployment rate has steadily increased over the past few years. The unemployment rates for this area for the last five years are presented in Table 5.

**Table 5**

**County Annual Unemployment Rate for  
Community College One**

---

| <b>Year</b> | <b>Percent</b> |
|-------------|----------------|
| 2010        | 9.5            |
| 2009        | 9.0            |
| 2008        | 6.3            |
| 2007        | 5.9            |
| 2006        | 6.7            |

---

Source: The County Information Project, 2010

**Community College One County Economy**

This city was once a dominant area for refining copper. Today the primary manufacturing industries in the city include food production, clothing, construction materials, plastics, and medical equipment. The area produces cotton, livestock, fruit, vegetables, and pecans.

Data also revealed that there were 13,273 private businesses in the city in 2008 that employed 209,629 people (Census, 2010). Table 6 reveals a breakdown of business firms in 2007. Hispanics were the dominant business owners in 2007, followed by women-owned businesses.

**Table 6****Total Firms in County in 2007 for Community College One**

| <b>Firms in 2007</b>                                  | <b>County<br/>Percent</b> | <b>Texas<br/>Percent</b> |
|---|---------------------------|--------------------------|
| Hispanic-owned  | 61.4                      | 20.7                     |
| Women-owned   | 27.1                      | 28.8                     |
| Black-owned   | 2.2                       | 7.1                      |
| American Indian and Alaskan Native                    | 1.1                       | 0.9                      |
| Asian-owned (2002)                                    | 2.0                       | 4.5                      |
| Native Hawaiian and Other<br>Pacific Islanders (2007) | F (fewer than 100)        | 0.1                      |
| Total number of firms                                 | 63,165                    | 2,165,252                |

Source: Census, 2011

The dominant employment industry for the County is healthcare, which employs almost 68,000 people, representing almost 24% of civilians employed. Other employment sectors include retail, manufacturing, professional, arts, transportation, and construction, among others. The smallest employment sector is agriculture, forestry, fishing, hunting, and mining, with 1,677 people representing 0.6% of civilians employed (CC1, 2010). The industries are shown in Table 7.

**Table 7**

**Employed Civilians in County by Industry: 2006-2008**

**Community College One**

| <b>Industry</b>                                 | <b>Number</b>  | <b>Percent</b> |
|---|----------------|----------------|
| <b>Employed Civilians 16+ years old</b>         | <b>286,897</b> | <b>100.0%</b>  |
| Educational, health care and social services    | 67,693         | 23.6           |
| Retail trade                                    | 34,140         | 11.9           |
| Manufacturing                                   | 27,476         | 9.6            |
| Professional, scientific, management, waste     | 24,688         | 8.6            |
| Arts, entertainment, recreation, accommodations |                |                |
| Food services                                   | 24,166         | 8.4            |
| Transportation and warehousing, and utilities   | 21,094         | 7.4            |
| Construction                                    | 20,161         | 7.0            |
| Public administration                           | 19,236         | 6.7            |
| Other services (other than public admin)        | 14,501         | 5.1            |
| Finance and insurance and real estate           | 14,157         | 4.9            |
| Wholesale trade                                 | 8,976          | 3.1            |
| Information                                     | 8,932          | 3.1            |
| Agriculture, forestry, fishing, hunting, mining | 1,677          | 0.6            |

Source: CC1, 2010



## **Community College One Mission and Values**

### **Vision**

Community College One shall be the progressive leader in high-quality, innovative, educational opportunities in response to our border community **Mission**

To provide educational opportunities and support services that prepares individuals to improve their personal quality of life and to contribute to their economically and culturally diverse community

### **District Goals**

- To provide quality education
- To provide quality student service
- To provide personal enrichment
- To promote economic development initiatives
- To strengthen institutional resources
- To increase technological capacity
- To demonstrate continuous improvement
- To enhance the image of the College

### **Core Values**

- Communication
- Competence
- Integrity
- Personal Growth
- Respect
- Student Success
- Trust (CC1, 2010)

## Community College One Demographics

The student body is predominantly Hispanic and female. Full-time attendance is 39% and the average age is 24. Table 8 presents the total enrollment demographics as of fall 2010.

**Table 8**

### Student Enrollment Demographics for Community College One

| Gender                                    | Percent |
|---|---------|
| Men:                                      | 42.6    |
| Women:                                    | 57.4    |
| <b>Ethnicity</b>                          |         |
| Hispanic/Latino                           | 85.0    |
| White                                     | 8.9     |
| Black or African American                 | 2.4     |
| Non-resident alien                        | 2.3     |
| Asian                                     | 0.9     |
| American Indian or Alaskan Native         | 0.3     |
| Race/ethnicity unknown                    | 0.3     |
| Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander | 0.0     |

Source: NCES, 2010

As of fall 2008, the College employed 2,781 people including full and part-time faculty, administrators, professionals, and classified personnel. The dominant gender employed was female (57%), while the dominant ethnicity was Hispanic (71%). Male employees represented 43%; Anglos represented 24%, with the remaining 5% comprised of African Americans, Asians/Pacific Islanders, and Native American/Alaskans (CC1,

2010). The educational attainment level of the teaching faculty of 1,178 was comprised predominantly of Master's degrees at 64.8% followed respectively by Bachelor's degrees, 17.7%; Doctorates, 9%; Associates, 5.8%; Certificates, 2%; High School Diplomas, 0.4% and none at 0.2% (CC1, 2010).

The leadership at Community College One has worked very hard to reduce the number of students enrolling in developmental education. In 2003-04, 98% of first time in college (FTIC) students required developmental courses in math, reading, and writing. Since partnering with Achieving the Dream in 2004, this college has decreased the number of students requiring developmental education reading by 24% and developmental writing by 37% (AtD, 2010a). Math completion rates have also improved and fewer FTIC students required developmental education in three courses, with more requiring developmental education in one course. In 2011, because of their student success endeavors, CC1 received the Leah Myer Austin Institutional Student Success Leadership Award from AtD and Lumina Foundation for simultaneously increasing student success and college access. The Leah Meyer Austin Award recognizes outstanding institutional achievement in creating excellence and equity through the four principles of Achieving the Dream: strong leadership, the use of evidence to improve policies and programs, comprehensive engagement, and systemic institutional improvement (AtD, 2010c). The College received \$25,000 to be used for student success initiatives. AtD President and Chief Executive Officer, Dr. William Trueheart, is quoted as saying, "This College's resolute commitment to student success and completion has set them apart as an impressive example of what is possible at community colleges all

across the country” (College 1, 2011). In response to receiving the award, the College President remarked, “The Achieving the Dream initiative was the best thing that could have happened to us; it motivated us to use data intentionally to inform our decision making and helped us focus on student success” (CC1, 2011).

### **Community College One Participant Profiles**

In this section, the researcher briefly describes each of the categories of participants in the study.

#### **Chief Executive Officer.**

The Chief Executive Officer from Community College One (CC1) has been in higher education administration for 36 years, of which 28 years have been at the community college level (personal communication, October 7, 2011). The Chief Executive Officer received his Bachelor’s of Business Administration degree in Accounting and a Master’s of Arts degree in Educational Management and Development from New Mexico State University. He earned his Ph.D. in the Community College Leadership Program at the University of Texas at Austin. Prior to being President at CC1, he served as vice president of business services at a community college in Utah. He had served previously at CC1 as vice president of financial and administrative services as well as interim president. He was President at CC1 for 10 years from 2001 to 2011. He was President at CC1 longer than any previous President at that institution (personal communication, May 31, 2011). He was very active in the community and serves with a number of statewide and national organizations, such as:

- American Association of Community Colleges President’s Academy

- Formula Funding Advisory Committee for the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board
- Board of Directors of the Texas Education Reform Foundation
- Texas Guaranteed Student Loan Corporation Board of Directors
- Board Member, Carnegie Foundation
- Past-Chair of the Texas Association of Community Colleges
- Past-Chair of the Texas Association of Community College Trustees and Administrators

He has been honored by various businesses in the city, as well as being named to the city's Hall of Fame. The faculty and staff at Community College One credit him for his efforts and commitment to improve student outcomes. He saw Achieving the Dream as an opportunity to learn from others and participate in an initiative that would teach the institution to use data properly while leading to improved student success. Under his leadership the college grew and flourished into five campuses and five early college high schools with a sixth college campus and a sixth early college high school on the way. He recently resigned from Community College One to accept a presidency at another community college. During a recent interview with this Chief Executive Officer, I asked him how he felt about leaving an institution that he clearly left his mark on. His response left a profound image in my mind. He said:

We [a group] were talking with an artist earlier and one of the things he did at one of our Leadership Development Academy retreats was a four-hour session called "Painting with the Artist", and it's to use the creative juices of your mind to think outside of the box. One of the times he [artist] did that with us, he had everybody start painting pictures and after about an hour he said, "stop". He said, "Now take your picture and move it to the person to your right and let that person finish it". As I was talking to that group just a few minutes ago, I thought that is the perfect example of what's happened to me. Right now, I've started this picture called Community College One, and I've started putting my prints on it and my vision on it, but I haven't finished it. But it's time for me to pass that picture to the next

person and it's time for me to take the picture from this person and make an improvement on it, and this person is going to make an improvement on what I started. You have to trust that it's going to happen.

### **Board of Trustees.**

In the State of Texas, Board members are locally elected. Community College One has a seven-member Board comprised of four men and three women. They represent seven districts and meet monthly. The meetings include discussions regarding human resources, financial services, facilities, academic affairs and instruction, and student services. The Board is not organized by committee or by organizational area. If there is an issue about a specific department or organizational entity, the Board Chair sets up a committee and appoints a chair person to study the issue and make a recommendation to the Board.

Most of the members of the Board were recently elected. At least one board member has been on the board since before Achieving the Dream was initiated. In fact, he has been working in the community college system for over 40 years. He explained the responsibility of Board members is to evaluate the President to ensure the institution is being managed well, establish policy that will guide the college, reallocate or redirect funds to be used in the best interest of the college, and hire the right people with the right fit to help accomplish the goals of the college. He also discussed why Achieving the Dream was a good idea for his institution. He shared:

For the most part, we have a population that earns less than average salary throughout the country. So we had, what you might call "poor" students, I don't like that term, but, poor students. Also, ones that have had less advantage than ever before, so those were the reasons we were excited about getting involved in this program. We reviewed the goals and objectives of the program and it's been very successful, I think, here.

### **Leadership Team.**

The Leadership Team that participated in this study represented various roles within the institution. These included: Vice President of Instruction, Vice President of Financial Operations, Dean, Coordinator of Student Success, Director of Student Success, Liaison for Achieving the Dream, Director of Testing, Director of Grants, and faculty. The Leadership Team from Community College One has been working together well before Achieving the Dream. They are comprised of Cabinet members and the AtD Core Team. Their years of service at Community College One range from 18 to 36 years. There is very little turnover at this institution. As one employee said, “people never leave this institution.” They love the students, the college, the culture, and the community. They credit their President for his commitment and support of their efforts. This group’s commitment and leadership has led to the development and success of sustained innovations such as the College Readiness Initiative, Summer Bridge Program, the Pretesting Retesting Educational Program (PREP), Math Emporiums, and numerous other initiatives that demonstrate their commitment to ensure student success. It was their dedication that led the college to become an Achieving the Dream Leader College as well as a recipient of the Leah Myer Austin Student Success Award. They take student success very seriously and believe leaders are accountable and responsible to do their best to help students succeed. When asked what happens if students don’t succeed, one team member responded, “It’s a great loss, not just to the student, to the community. It’s also a failure on the part of the institution. That’s what we’re here for. A lot of people thought the job

was access, to let them come in, but you could have done tremendous harm to somebody that comes in and yet they don't succeed."

**Faculty.**

The faculty members in the study were from various disciplines including: speech, math, ESL, communications, business, reading, and developmental education. They have been at the institution from 10 to 30 years. They were part of the focus group that also included counselors. Conversations and interactions with the faculty clearly demonstrated they have a heart for students. They love their work and are always looking for ways to engage students and improve outcomes. Achieving the Dream has caused them to become more data-centered and student-focused. They credit their President for his vision and for encouraging faculty development that allows them to be excellent. They believe collaboration and teamwork are key components to improving outcomes and that participating in Achieving the Dream resulted in increased institutional knowledge and best practices that helped the students succeed.

**Coach.**

Member colleges of Achieving the Dream receive expert guidance and assistance from a coach and a data facilitator. The coaches are former community college presidents or others with higher levels of experience in institutional leadership and transformation. The data facilitators have expertise in using data and institutional research to identify areas of weakness and opportunities to improve student success (AtD, 2010).

The data facilitator described her role as follows:

I try to coach the college on the use and understanding of data for other forms of evidence that are associated with student success or lack of success, depending, to



identify where the gaps are, what are some of the issues, and what are some kinds of things where they can see that there are some serious problems. Sometimes I'm helping them on a somewhat more technical level, but really it is in examining and interpreting the data. Then looking at once you've got some kind of a sense of what the data are telling us, then the 'so what' questions. What are some options and help them identify some potential interventions, and then ultimately help them guide the development and implementation of an evaluation plan. I view my role as just asking questions, so that they figure it out for themselves.

In the next section, the researcher highlights a brief description of student success initiatives at CC1.

## **Community College One Student Success Initiatives**

### **College Readiness Initiative (CRI)**

This initiative is a joint effort between Community College One, the ISDs, and the local university allowing students to take the Accuplacer exam while in the 11<sup>th</sup> or 12<sup>th</sup> to ensure that the high school student can enter college taking college-level courses.

Students not passing one or more areas of Accuplacer receive interventions and are retested.

### **Summer Bridge/Project Dream Program**

For students who are not successful with the CRI while in high school, the Summer Bridge Program was developed to provide support for students just before they enter the community college needing remediation. The initiative provides instruction in reading, writing, and mathematics.

### **Pretesting Retesting Educational Program (PREP)**

The PREP helps entering students through a case management approach to help them prepare for the college placement exam before they take the placement exam.

Students who have never taken the placement test attend a Pretest Overview session where they learn tips on what to expect when taking a computerized adaptive placement test. Sample test questions are reviewed and discussed.

### **Math Emporium**

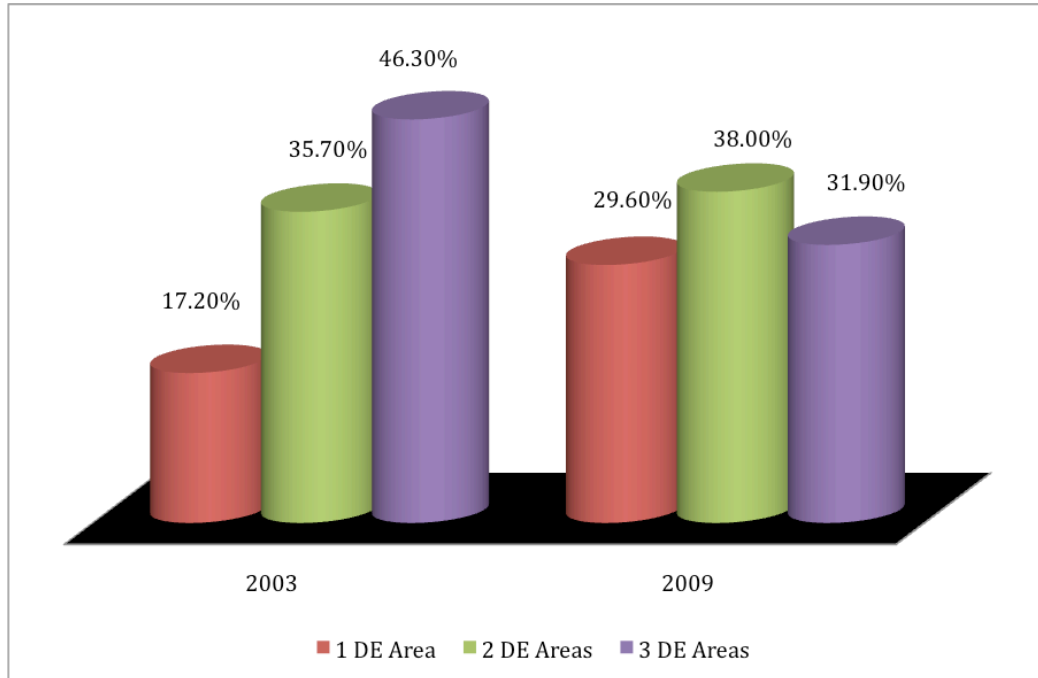
This initiative allows students to work at their own pace working through one or more courses during a 16-week or 8-week minimester course to master all areas of developmental education math. The student does not continue until they have mastered their deficiencies. Students are assessed during the first class sessions, given a summary of their deficiency and a program of study. All the work to make up their deficiencies is

done at their own pace. There are always instructors and/or tutors in the lab to assist the students. Findings in documents provided to the researcher show that 66% of all students enrolled in math emporium courses between Spring 2009 and Summer 2010 successfully completed at least one math course compared to 61% of students who completed successfully in Fall 2003.

Other data contained in documents provided to the researcher are summarized in the Figures 1 and 2 on the following pages.

**Figure 1**

**COMMUNITY COLLEGE ONE  
COLLEGE READINESS INITIATIVE  
DEVELOPMENTAL EDUCATION AREAS**

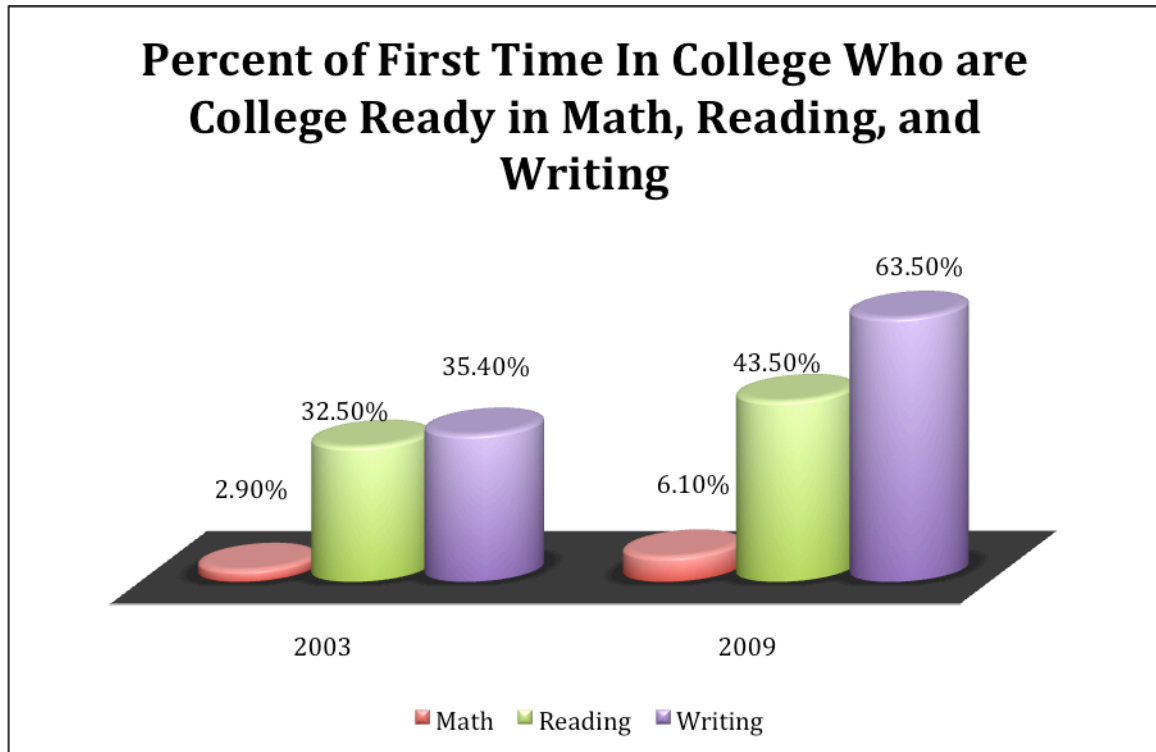


**Source: CC1**

Since the development of the College Readiness Initiative, more students are placing in two developmental areas, as opposed to three in 2003. In 2003, the percentage of students who placed in three developmental classes was 46.30%. In 2009, that number had been reduced to 31.9%, with most students (38%) taking two courses.

**Figure 2**

**COMMUNITY COLLEGE ONE**  
**COLLEGE READINESS INITIATIVE BY SUBJECT**



**Source: CC1**

To summarize, the interviews and data provided in the documents reveal student improvement in math, reading, and writing. Math improved by almost 3%, reading by 11 %, and writing by 28%.

Next, the study continues with a discussion of Community College Two.

## **Community College Two**

Community College Two (CC2) was established in 1958 in North Carolina and serves a community of 488,406 people (Census, 2010). It was founded as an Industrial Education Center that trained workers for technical jobs in the manufacturing industry. In 1965, the center was promoted to a Technical Institute and authorized to offer associate degrees. It began with 50 students enrolled in two classes. Today, Community College Two is the third largest of 58 community colleges in North Carolina. It is comprised of three campuses, with an enrollment of more than 43,000 credit and non-credit students. CC2 has 15,000 credit students.

## **Community College Two County Demographics**

Community College Two is located in a county that is 2000 square miles with a population of 488,406 people (Census, 2010). Since 2000, the County population has grown 16%. The dominant race represented in the County is Anglo at 57% followed by African Americans at 32.5%. See Table 9 for the ethnic breakdown of the County.

**Table 9****County Demographics for Community College Two**

| <b>Ethnicity</b>                               | <b>County<br/>Percent</b> | <b>NC<br/>Percent</b> |
|--|---------------------------|-----------------------|
| White  | 54.0                      | 68.5                  |
| Black  | 32.2                      | 21.5                  |
| Hispanic or Latino                             | 7.1                       | 8.4                   |
| Asian  | 3.9                       | 2.2                   |
| Persons of two or more races                   | 2.3                       | 2.2                   |
| American Indian and Alaskan Natives            | 0.5                       | 1.3                   |
| Native Hawaiian and<br>Other Pacific Islanders | 0.0                       | 0.1                   |

Source: Census, 2010

As of 2009, the County was comprised of 6.8% of people under the age of 5 years old, 23.8% of people under 18 years old, 12.4% of people 65 years and older, with females representing 52% of the population, and males at 48% of the population (Census, 2010). The census also reveals that between 2005-2009, 86.3% of persons over the age of 25 graduated from high school, and 32% earned a Bachelor's degree or higher. There were 186,377 households with an average of 2.4 persons per household. The median household income in 2009 was \$44,386 with 17.1% of people below the poverty line (Census, 2010). Data shows that the unemployment rate has steadily increased over the past few years. Table 10 displays the unemployment rates within the County for this area for the last five years.

**Table 10**

**County Annual Unemployment Rate**

**Community College Two**

---

| <b>Year</b> | <b>Percent</b> |
|-------------|----------------|
| 2010        | 9.9            |
| 2009        | 10.8           |
| 2008        | 6.3            |
| 2007        | 4.7            |
| 2006        | 4.6            |

---

Source: City-Data, 2010

**Community College Two County Economy**

The economy of the County has consistently changed. Manufacturing jobs in furniture and textiles have significantly declined, while jobs in computer and electronics, electrical and transportation equipment have shown growth (CC2 County, 2010). The local crops are tobacco, corn, cotton, soybeans, peanuts, forages and small grains (NCSU, 2010).

According to the Census (2010), there were 13,821 private businesses in the County in 2008 that employed 259,567 people. Table 11 reveals the breakdown of business firms in 2007. The majority of businesses were non-minority owned (Census, 2010).



**Table 11****Total Firms in County in 2007 for Community College Two**

| <b>Firms in 2007</b>                           | <b>County Percent</b> | <b>NC Percent</b> |
|--|-----------------------|-------------------|
| Non-minority owned                             | 46.8                  | 55.4              |
| Women-owned                                    | 29.2                  | 28.2              |
| Black-owned                                    | 16.7                  | 10.5              |
| Asian-owned (2002)                             | 3.4                   | 2.1               |
| Hispanic-owned                                 | 3.0                   | 2.7               |
| American Indian and Alaskan Native             | 0.9                   | 1.0               |
| Native Hawaiian and Other<br>Pacific Islanders | F (less than 100)     | 0.1               |
| Total number of firms                          | 45,287                | 798,966           |

Source: Census, 2011

According to a report generated by the North Carolina Commerce Department, the top employers for the 4<sup>th</sup> quarter of 2010 in the County were in education, health services transportation and utilities, manufacturing, and financial activities. Table 12 lists the top 20 ranked employers of the County during the 4<sup>th</sup> quarter of 2010. Each company hired a minimum of 1000 employees.

**Table 12****Major Businesses 4<sup>th</sup> Quarter 2010 for Community College Two**

| <b>Company</b>             | <b>Industry</b>                  |
|----------------------------|----------------------------------|
| County Schools             | Education & Health Services      |
| City                       | Public Administration            |
| Local University           | Education and Health Services    |
| U.S. Postal Service        | Trade Transportation & Utilities |
| United Parcel Service      | Trade Transportation & Utilities |
| County Offices             | Public Administration            |
| Wal-Mart Associates        | Trade Transportation & Utilities |
| Electronics Corp           | Manufacturing                    |
| Harris Teeter              | Trade Transportation & Utilities |
| United Healthcare Services | Financial Activities             |
| Amex Card Services Company | Financial Activities             |
| Volvo Group North America  | Professional & Business Services |
| Tobacco Company            | Manufacturing                    |
| Community College Two      | Education & Health Services      |
| Bac Home Loans Servicing   | Financial Activities             |

Source: Commerce, 2010

## **Community College Two Mission and Values**

### **Mission**

Community College Two provides lifelong learning opportunities for personal growth, workforce productivity, and community service. We serve all segments of the County's diverse population, delivering quality educational programs and services through partnerships with business, community groups, and other educational institutions.

### **Values**

- We value learning.
- We value our students.
- We value challenging, innovative instruction and targeted services that meet the needs of individual students.
- We value employees who are committed to providing services that ensure student success.
- We value diversity.
- We value honesty and integrity.
- We value institutional effectiveness achieved through planning and teamwork.

### **College Goals/Results**

- The students will learn the skills and knowledge that will enable them to reach their educational goals.
- The College will be respected and valued by residents of the County. It will be regarded as a major contributor to the quality of life in the county.
- The College will be a partner in attracting and retaining business and industry, contributing to the economic development of the County.
- The College will attract and retain qualified and caring employees.
- The College will be accountable to students, taxpayers, and the public.
- The College will be a benchmark by which other community colleges measure their progress.

**Processes**

- The College will provide excellent/innovative teaching, appropriate technology for learning, and targeted student services.
- The College will pursue excellence in all it does, will make its facilities available to the public, and will support good citizenship by students and employees.
- The College will respond promptly with high-quality programs that meet the needs of both new and existing businesses and industries, and that support area economic development efforts.
- The College will empower, reward, and develop the skills and abilities of its employees.
- The College will identify and measure desired outcomes both in the operation of the College and in the classroom.
- The College will be alert to new approaches, technologies, and knowledge, and will apply them in the context of its mission and goals.

**Community College Two Demographics**

The student body is predominantly minority and female. Full-time attendance is 61% and the average student is 27 years old (CC2, 2011). The demographic makeup for 2009-2010 is presented below in Table 13.

**Table 13**

**Student Enrollment Demographics for Community College Two**

| <b>Gender</b>                             | <b>Percent</b> |
|---|----------------|
| Men:                                      | 44.3           |
| Women:                                    | 55.7           |
| <b>Ethnicity</b>                          |                |
| White                                     | 44.0           |
| Black or African American                 | 43.8           |
| Hispanic                                  | 3.8            |
| Asian                                     | 3.1            |
| Race unknown                              | 2.8            |
| Two or more races                         | 0.9            |
| American Indian or Alaskan Native         | 0.7            |
| Non-resident alien                        | 0.7            |
| Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander | 0.2            |

Source: NCES, 2011

There are approximately 292 full-time and 728 part-time faculty members.

Anglos and females make up the majority of the faculty at 76% and 54%, respectively.

The College offers 93 degrees, 26 diplomas and 78 certificates (CC2, 2011).

Since partnering with AtD in 2004, Community College Two has almost eliminated an 11% persistence gap between African American males and Caucasian males in developmental education (AtD, 2010a). This college has reshaped its culture and begun to focus on programs that improve student outcomes. In recognition of their student success efforts, this college was honored in 2010 by AtD and Lumina Foundation with the Leah Meyer Austin Institutional Student Success Leadership Award for its

unique and effective front door experience, which combines intensive first-year student support services with a major physical and functional restructuring of the school's student services facilities (AtD, 2010c). The college received \$25,000 to be used for student success initiatives. According to their President, "Participating in Achieving the Dream helped us make tremendous changes in the culture of our college...In our 50-year history, there has never been an initiative that has produced more meaningful involvement of the total college community and yielded such beneficial results" (AtD, 2010c).

### **Community College Two Participant Profiles**

In this section, the researcher briefly describes each of the categories of participants in the study.

#### **Chief Executive Officer.**

The Chief Executive Officer from Community College Two has worked in public education for 45 years, with 30 of those at the community college level (CC2, 2011). Until his recent retirement, this Chief Executive Officer served at this institution for the last twenty years, after being named the sixth president in 1991. He received an A.A. in Education from Wingate Junior College, a Bachelors degree in History and Physical Education from Atlantic Christian College, a M.A.T. in Educational Administration and Physical Education from the University of North Carolina, and an Ed.D in Community College Administration from Nova University. His experience includes serving as a high school teacher and coach, director of continuing education, vice president for academic affairs and executive vice president for nine years at Community College Two.

Under the Chief Executive Officer's leadership at this institution, partnerships have been formed with local businesses and with the public schools to implement the Tech Prep and the Middle College programs, the College's budget has doubled, and four bond referendums have passed to construct new buildings.

The Board of Trustees honored this Chief Executive Officer, by bestowing on him the title of President Emeritus because of his leadership at the College. The trustees' resolution noted, "the college has achieved and enjoys a preeminent reputation among community colleges throughout the country because of this Chief Executive Officer's leadership." The trustees have also agreed to name the fourth new campus (which broke ground in August, 2011) after this Chief Executive Officer. The new campus will be completed in 2013 (CC2, 2011).

#### **Board of Trustees.**

In the state of North Carolina, the number of board members for community colleges varies depending on the district's size. The Governor, the County Commissioner, and the Board of Education collectively appoint all community college board members in North Carolina. In the case of a 12-member board, each entity appoints four members. In addition to the 12 appointed trustees, the college's Student Government Association (SGA) President serves as a member of the board to represent the students of the institution. The trustees are appointed to four-year terms that are staggered to ensure diversity in experience and members. Many are re-appointed for multiple terms.

The Board for CC2 is comprised of 12 members consisting of eight men and four women, plus the SGA President. The board is divided into four committees: curriculum,

finance, facilities, and personnel. Each member serves on two committees. Most of the current board members from this institution are new and very few of them were there at the beginning of Achieving the Dream. One board member, who was there when Achieving the Dream was introduced to the institution, participated in the study.

Reflecting on the Board's thoughts about Achieving the Dream, he said,

Even before Achieving the Dream, [CC2] had sensitivity to the students that were struggling to be successful. So we had a culture there that was already sensitive to the challenges that some of our students were dealing with. Whether it be family issues or work related, or financial or lack of academic preparation, or regardless, there's already a sensitivity and awareness of some of that. So Achieving the Dream really helped us focus some of those concerns. The Board tended to be more program based [before AtD].

According to the board member, the finance and curriculum committee felt that though the cost would be great to become a member of Achieving the Dream, the cost would be greater to remain uninvolved. The decision could not be made without looking at attrition, dropout rates, the effect on developmental education, and the cost to the community in training the workforce. The Board believed that Achieving the Dream saved them money in the long run. The board member remarked, "The wisest use of resources was to invest in Achieving the Dream."

### **Leadership Team.**

The team members who participated in this study included: Former Vice President for Educational Support Services, Former Executive Vice President, Director of Institutional Research, Division Chair of Business Technologies, Former Director of Institutional Research, Special Assistant to VP of Student Learning & Success, Dean of Student Support Services, Coordinator of Student Success, Director of Student Success,



Director of Testing Services, Director of Grants Management, Executive Assistant to President, VP of Instruction, and Dean, and Counselors. The Leadership Team worked very hard to improve student outcomes at their institution. Their years of service to the institution range from 20 to 30 years. Through their commitment and passion for student success, many new initiatives were developed which proved to improve student outcomes. Some of those included: Student Orientation Advising and Registration (SOAR), the Advocacy Program, and Compass Review. Members of the team overwhelmingly credit the Vice President of Educational Support Services for the success of Achieving the Dream in improved student achievement at their institution. One team member described the passion of this leader for Achieving the Dream and students. She explained,

She [*VP Educational Support Services*] was always excited about Achieving the Dream and what the possibilities were. In terms of making Achieving the Dream a go, she had the fire, she carried the banner, she was rah, rah, rah, and I think it was because of her leadership that we were so successful. She had the vision that we could be better. At every opportunity she waved the banner, and I think that because she selected people to work on the core team who were as committed, as she was, that they carried the banner back to their particular areas. She lived and breathed Achieving the Dream and what it could do.

### **Faculty.**

The faculty who participated in the study was from the disciplines of Developmental Education, Supplemental Instruction, General Education, and Health Sciences. They have all worked at Community College Two between 10 and 30 years. They participated in various capacities in Achieving the Dream, such as serving in the Advocacy Program, serving on the Institutional Effectiveness Committee and Directing the Developmental Education Initiative Grant (DEI). They all felt that Achieving the

Dream was beneficial in addressing student retention and at-risk populations groups, while helping students to succeed and achieve their goals. The group credits the institution's leadership for the level of success they have achieved. However, according to one faculty member, you need more than that. She explained,

You also have to have committed leadership from people like myself who have chosen to stay in the classroom but really have a personal stake in seeing something work. So, you need it from top to bottom, if you consider me the bottom. I mean you really need it the whole way through. And really to have the students' best interest at heart, and that's easy to say and sometimes hard to really do, but you have to have someone that really believes in the program and that it will work well and that it is okay to stumble and brush off and fix what didn't work properly and continue on.

**Coach.**

The Coach spoke about the role of coaches in the following dialogue:

One of the very important things for the coach, and I'm going to say the coaches because now the data facilitator is called a coach. It is important for the two coaches to work as a team, so therefore I don't go to the president's office and he goes to the data facilitator's office. We both go to the president and then we both go to the data facilitator, because data is what's used to make change and bring about change, so that's one of the things we did. The other thing we did is that I advised. I did not require anything. In my report, I reported what was going well, I reported what needed to be improved, and I made suggestions for improving it. The only thing that I encouraged them to do was community colleges typically have not conducted research of student and faculty performance, and they certainly were required by virtue of the Achieving the Dream grant to measure what they were doing. So between the data facilitator and myself, we had to build the facility for warehousing student data and keeping it accessible to the component directors and the leadership. That was done with the President's support.

The data facilitator described her role as follows:

I worked very closely with the IR (Institutional Research). I helped the IR to devise different measures and how those measures might be operationalized and to look at different comparison groups. We worked together to aggregate the data by gender, ethnicity, age and other variables that were of interest. I also worked

with the leadership team in defining specific questions that were important to analyze and to look at the data. We also worked to devise some protocol for focus groups and other types of qualitative measures, as well as discussing different types of faculty development that might be appropriate or recommended.

## **Summary**

The participants in this study were from two community colleges, one located in Texas and the other located in North Carolina. The colleges were different in some aspects such as their student demographics and college locations. They were very similar, however, in their commitment to achieving and improving student outcomes. Each college is a well-recognized Achieving the Dream Leader College. Both colleges have also won the Leah Meyer Austin Institutional Student Success Leadership Award for their commitment to student success. Each college has also developed multiple initiatives to help students complete their educations.

There were thirty-three participants in the study: 2 Presidents, 14 administrators, 11 faculty members, 4 coaches, and 2 board members. Everyone in the study had at least 9 years experience in higher education and represented a diverse educational background. The participants seemed to have a genuine desire to see students succeed and felt when students did not succeed, they [participants] did not succeed.

The next section provides a brief description of student success initiatives at CC2.

## **Community College Two Student Success Initiatives**

**Compass Review Initiative:** This initiative is designed to help students pass the Compass exam. Students cannot take the exam a second time until after taking the review class. It is mandatory for those students who need to repeat the exam.

### **SOAR: Student Orientation, Advising and Registration**

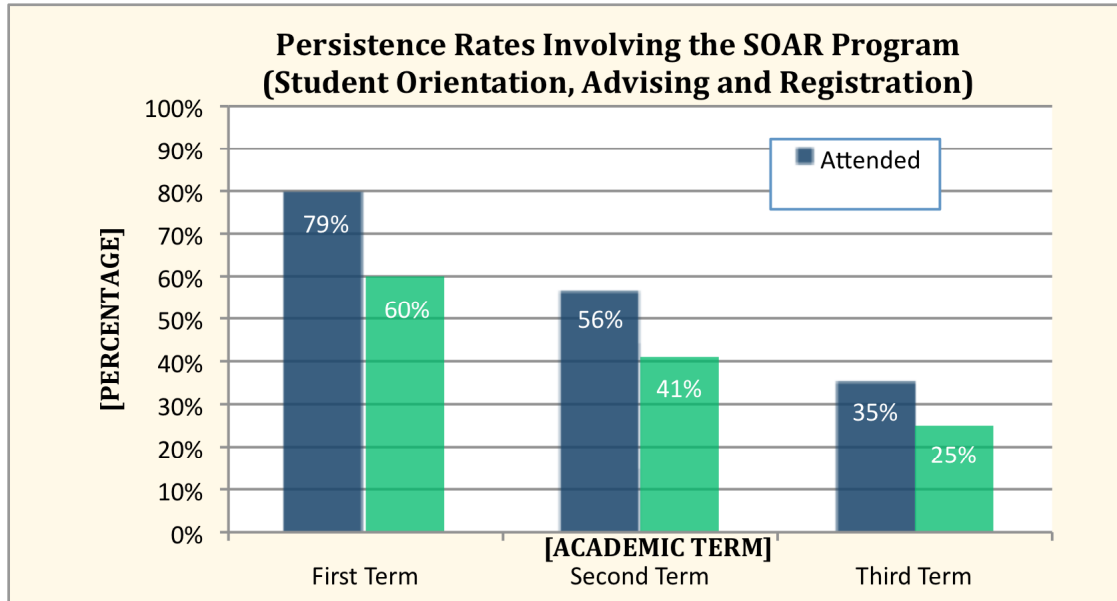
This initiative is mandatory for First Time In College (FTIC) students. It includes approximately three hours of advising and orientation as well as an information session.

**Student Advocacy Initiative:** Provides mentoring opportunities for students. The volunteers take on 2 to 3 students to help them get acclimated to the campus. It has, however, proven to be difficult to engage the students to participate.

Other data contained in documents provided to the researcher are summarized in Figures 3 and 4 on the following pages.

**Figure 3**

**COMMUNITY COLLEGE TWO  
SOAR**



Source: CC2

This figure indicates that students who enter through SOAR have higher rates of persistence than students who did not participate in the program. Today SOAR is a mandatory requirement for students.

**Figure 4****COMMUNITY COLLEGE TWO****Term-to-Term and Year-to-Year Retention**

| <b>New<br/>Developmental<br/>Education<br/>Students</b> | <b>Fall 2004-<br/>Fall 2005</b> |             | <b>Fall 2005-<br/>Fall 2006</b> |             | <b>Fall 2006-<br/>Fall 2007</b> |             | <b>Fall 2007-<br/>Fall 2008</b> |             |
|---|---------------------------------|-------------|---------------------------------|-------------|---------------------------------|-------------|---------------------------------|-------------|
|   | <b>Persisted</b>                |             | <b>Persisted</b>                |             | <b>Persisted</b>                |             | <b>Persisted</b>                |             |
|   | <b>Count</b>                    | <b>%</b>    | <b>Count</b>                    | <b>%</b>    | <b>Count</b>                    | <b>%</b>    | <b>Count</b>                    | <b>%</b>    |
| <b>African<br/>American Males</b>                       | <b>89</b>                       | <b>43.6</b> | <b>104</b>                      | <b>43.5</b> | <b>113</b>                      | <b>49.6</b> | <b>129</b>                      | <b>50.4</b> |
| <b>Anglo Males</b>                                      | <b>162</b>                      | <b>54.5</b> | <b>146</b>                      | <b>50.5</b> | <b>168</b>                      | <b>52.5</b> | <b>158</b>                      | <b>50.6</b> |
| <b>Gap in<br/>Persistence</b>                           |                                 | <b>10.9</b> |                                 | <b>7</b>    |                                 | <b>2.9</b>  |                                 | <b>.2</b>   |

**Source: CC2**

Through the enrollment in a student success course, ACA 111, linked to a gateway course and SOAR, new developmental education students persisted at higher rates than before. For the first time the gap was almost closed between African American males and Anglo males. In summary, the interviews and data provided in the documents showed a pattern of student improvement in persistence through SOAR.

The next chapter discusses the research findings.

## **CHAPTER FIVE: RESEARCH FINDINGS**

### **Introduction**

This qualitative, multi-case study investigated leadership practices used to increase student success through sustaining innovation at Achieving the Dream Leader Colleges. This chapter presents the research findings from the responses of Chief Executive Officers, Board of Trustees, the Leadership Team, Faculty members, and Achieving the Dream (AtD) Coaches in regard to leadership practices that led to improved student success. The following three research questions guided this study:

1. What leadership practices were employed by the following to sustain innovation that led to increased student success?
  - A. The Chief Executive Officer
  - B. The Board of Trustees
  - C. The Leadership Team
  - D. The Faculty
2. What was the perception of the Achieving the Dream coach and data facilitator regarding the leadership practices that led to increased student success?
3. What obstacles to change were encountered by stakeholders during innovation sustainability?

## **Findings**

The responses from the participants in the study led to the emergence of the following themes and practices: (a) commitment and support to improve student outcomes and achieve equity; (b) use of data to inform decisions; (c) broad engagement; (d) systemic institutionalization; and (e) leading with passion.

Through interviews, a focus group and a review of relevant documentation, the researcher provided a description and analysis of practices that were used to increase student success through sustaining innovation at two Achieving the Dream Leader Colleges. Individual interviews consisted of Chief Executive Officers, Board of Trustee members, the Leadership Team, Faculty, and Coaches. The findings of the three research questions are presented separately and sequentially. Each section begins with the research question, followed by the theme and findings from both interviews and focus group. The findings from the study will be supported and illustrated by rich descriptions provided by the participants in the study. Summaries of the findings follow each research question.

### **Research Question One**

What Leadership Practices were Employed by the Chief Executive Officer, Board of Trustees, Leadership Team, and Faculty to Sustain Innovation that Led to Increased Student Success?

#### **Theme One: Commitment and Support to Improve Student Outcomes and Achieve Equity**

The first theme to emerge as a practice from the study was commitment and support to improve student outcomes and achieve equity. Commitment refers to being involved or engaged in a process or action. Support is expressed by aiding, helping,



assisting, or backing up others. Commitment and support are sometimes used interchangeably. Data gathered during interviews and the focus group consistently highlighted the commitment of the participants to student success. According to Achieving the Dream (AtD), commitment is demonstrated through vision and values, which encompass more than high enrollments, but active support efforts by the Chief Executive Officer and leadership team to enhance student learning and completion and evidence that the Chief Executive Officer and other senior leaders have made a policy pledge to achieve equity in student outcomes for all racial/ethnic and income groups (AtD, 2010b). Participants expressed their points of view as follows.

**Chief Executive Officer.**

The Chief Executive Officer from CC1 commented on the importance of being physically present in demonstrating support and commitment and the consequences of the leader's absence:

The role of the President has to be a committed leader, and if you're not there at the table, then the message that it sends to the faculty, staff and students is that it's not important. So, from day one, the president of the college has to be present. I may be there more to listen, than to lead the discussions.

This Chief Executive Officer further explained that leaders demonstrate a commitment to student success by including other members of the organization in developing a shared vision for the college and by encouraging professional development and research opportunities. Lastly, in a bold statement which illustrated his level of commitment to student success, this Chief Executive Officer encouraged the use of the Mark Milliron methodology, "copy and steal everything" to improve student success. The

Chief Executive Officer was referring to researching and duplicating best practices from other institutions.

The Chief Executive Officer from CC2 explained that he demonstrated support and commitment to student success by becoming a supporter of Achieving the Dream and by seeking out others who felt equally as strong about helping students improve outcomes:

I have become an advocate for Achieving the Dream and what that process will lead you through to get to the point where students are more successful. Number one, I tried to find some champions inside the faculty and staff and particularly in our developmental area. We really do have some strong champions in developmental education. So if you hire the people who are committed to making sure students are successful and you find those champions who will then encourage other faculty, so it's faculty-to-faculty, and staff-to-staff, that would be it, finding those champions.

Both Chief Executive Officers expressed an active involvement in efforts to improve student success. For the Chief Executive Officer from CC1, a physical presence was very important; while the Chief Executive Officer from CC2 believed consciously seeking people who were student-focused was a demonstration of support and commitment to student success. Even though they both discussed different ways of demonstrating commitment, their actions are supported by Achieving the Dream in that senior college leaders should actively support efforts to improve student success and not just seek to increase enrollment (AtD, 2009).

#### **Board of Trustees.**

Commitment from members of the Board of Trustees was different from that of the Chief Executive Officers in that they are considered overseers of the Chief Executive

Officers as well as the college. The Board member from CC1 discussed his role as it relates to being committed to student success:

First of all, it is to review policies to make sure policies are contributory to student accommodation. Then, to make sure the funds are available to employ the kinds of people that you want to work with the students. And the third role and an important one, is to on regular occasions take a look at what's going on and see how well it's working, evaluation.

This Board member explained that even though the Board evaluates the Chief Executive Officer and campus operations, they are also committed to trusting the leadership of the Chief Executive Officer to improve student success. He commented:

As a trustee you need to keep your hands off of some activities. But you need to see that they're done and so our role then is to work with the leadership of administration to make sure that that is done. That's part of the evaluation process for administration primarily for the President. But a lot of times, my best role is to get out of the way as a trustee.

The Board member from CC2 went a step further by adding that commitment begins with admitting that the institution has not done as much as they could have to improve student success:

I think the first thing is that you have to acknowledge that there is an issue, and the issue for us was that we had a number of students who were entering our school who weren't completing their academic goals. We first acknowledged it. We realized that it was undesirable. I guess that was the second thing. And then as a third thing was to acknowledge that we probably could move the needle on that, but it would take resources.

According to this member, after acknowledging their responsibility to student success, the Board committed to allocating resources to help improve student outcomes.

While both Board members believed that it was their role to commit resources to student success, accountability for student success was expressed by the Board member from CC2, but not by the Board member from CC1. Perhaps the response of the Board

member from CC2 is related to his experiences at the college, the community, or pressure from the state to improve student outcomes. It could also be because he served as Board Chair and felt closer to the issues. Nevertheless, the actions of both members demonstrated support and commitment to student success and are supported by Achieving the Dream, which suggests that senior leaders must be committed to supporting changes in policies and resource allocations to improve student success. It is the Chief Executive Officer's responsibility to keep the Board apprised of student success efforts and outcomes.

### **Leadership Team.**

The Leadership Team, also referred to as the core team, was intimately involved in ensuring student success. It was this group that committed to meet regularly with the Chief Executive Officer, departmental committees, and AtD representatives to discuss student success strategies.

The following Team member from CC1 shared that commitment to student success was demonstrated by changing the direction of the college from one solely focused on student enrollment to one that included student success. Comments from the majority of Team members from CC1 mirrored his response.

We like, every other college, would celebrate the increases in enrollment from one semester to the next, and we touted that as a measure of our success, but we had taken our eye off the ball and had lost sight of how many of the students were exiting the pipeline and crossing the finish line at graduation. Interestingly, when we began to look at it, we realized that maybe we weren't as good as we thought we were. We also knew that there was an increasingly intrusive public eye on higher education to be held responsible for what we offer. The public wasn't simply going to continue to give money to our institution and say we know you're doing a good job. They at some point were going to say, show us you're doing a good job, "prove it." We knew that the handwriting was on the wall.

According to the same Team member, in order to change the direction and culture of the institution to one that included both enrollments and student success, the group had a “come to Jesus meeting” in which they realized that something was terribly wrong because 98% of their students were testing in developmental education math. This revelation intensified their commitment to student success and led to the development of various initiatives designed to help improve student achievement:

It became an opportunity for us to think what we can do smarter, better, more efficiently to help students be successful in math. That is what has directly led to such things as our Math Emporiums that we’re building on each and every campus. Essentially, it’s an approach to math education that’s sort of open entry, open exit. Students can come in and progress at their own pace through the curriculum, and there are folks in the labs to help if they run into problems.

One CC1 Team member explained that she demonstrated commitment and support to student success by assessing the needs of the students to determine which support services would best benefit the students. She commented:

We were to consider what the students needs were, what they wanted, what they needed. We opened up more things and we did surveys to see what the students want. It’s amazing how we think we know what students like, but it’s a different thing when you give a survey. Then you tell your staff, it’s not what we think is convenient; it’s what’s convenient for them.

In essence, they began to listen to the students and not make assumptions based on what they normally did for students. As a result of their assessment, additional testing sessions were added.

Another CC1 Team member responded that their role in demonstrating commitment was to evaluate developmental education to find ways to make it more effective for students. She responded:

My role was to establish the developmental education council. There were standing committees: reading, developmental English, developmental math, and early interventions that were part of the council. We had to look carefully at ways in which we could improve the programming. This also led us to look at how we structured developmental education.

The member further shared that their commitment to student achievement led them to research best practices, which helped them restructure developmental education classes.

The other Team members and faculty from CC1 discussed specific initiatives that demonstrated their commitment to student success.

A Team member from CC2 was the only member from her Team who stressed the importance of dialogue and taking action as demonstrations of commitment to student success:

Well, one commitment is rhetoric. You have to talk about it. You have to put it out there as frequently as you can, whenever you have a chance to address the internal constituency, in particular. You have to put it out there. You also have to devote some person power to it and not just lower-level person power; you have to get the next couple of levels of leadership also committed to it, and not just in terms of rhetoric, but also in terms of taking action. You have to put it into the budget as a priority as well, and it has to be clear that it's not just an add-on that's going to go away when the special funding goes away.

The researcher supposes the reason this participant spoke so strongly about rhetoric was probably because she coordinated AtD efforts. According to participants from CC2, she embraced AtD like no one else at her institution. According to her team, this participant had the “fire” for AtD and her enthusiasm ignited everyone else about AtD.

One CC2 Team member's response paralleled that of CC1 as she demonstrated commitment and support to students by assessing their needs. Her comments were that she:

Encouraged the staff and the various offices that when they [students] come through to spend time with the students to determine what it is they really want, and to look at things that students say they want and need and then provide information that will help them do whatever it is they want.

Almost every Team member from CC2 mentioned commitment and support of students through a specific initiatives such as called SOAR, [Student Orientation Advising and Registration], that was very affective in student success. SOAR represented a comprehensive effort to help students identify their learning styles, as well as help students understand the relevance of things associated with the college such as a syllabus or the library. One Team member felt that this was important because some students come from homes where no one in their families has been to college.

Another major initiative at CC2 was the development of a student success course, ACA 111, which is credited for helping to reduce the persistence gap between African American males and white males. The Team seemed very excited about this development. Their excitement is understandable and warranted, because historically, black males have lagged behind other groups in persistence and achievement. The data revealed that the gap was almost closed with a .2 difference.

A Team member from CC1 added that her Chief Executive Officer builds practices for student success by committing to *Ladders to Success*. Ladders is an acronym which stands for: a) Lead with Passion; (b) Access and Opportunity; (c) Develop Team;

(d) Develop Community, and (e) Evaluate. (See Appendix B for more details about Ladders).

In accordance with Achieving the Dream, actions taken by both of the Leadership Teams illustrated support and commitment to student success because they actively communicated and addressed problems students were experiencing, and sought solutions to change the students' outcomes from failure to success by implementing specific initiatives or by modifying existing practices, such as eliminating late registration, and by making student orientation mandatory.

**Faculty.**

One way that faculty demonstrated support and commitment was by working directly with students through specific programs to help reduce the number of students in developmental education. A faculty member from CC1 discussed how her institution has been successful in that area:

We have our PREP Program [Pretesting Retesting Educational Program] that gives students preparation before they take their Accuplacer exam, and as little as six hours really helps them with achieving a much higher placement score. The other thing is through the College Ready Consortium, [in which] we have the juniors and seniors being tested while they're still in high school on the Accuplacer, so before they leave high school, they actually have interventions so they can retake the test.

She added that the institution also offers a Summer Bridge Program, which is a very intensive five-week class that offers students assistance in reading, writing and mathematics.



A faculty member from CC2 commented that he demonstrated commitment to student success by helping students complete his courses as well as by managing a grant that extended the life of AtD efforts:

My role as a faculty member was to try to increase the percentage of students who lasted through my courses, who stayed to the end and didn't drop out, and were ultimately successful in the gateway English classes. I managed the DEI [Developmental Education Initiative] Grant. The DEI grant takes the Achieving the Dream principles and focuses on developmental education, moving students gradually and more successfully through developmental education.

Faculty members from both teams shared that they assessed and evaluated courses to determine effectiveness as a sign of support and commitment to student success.

Committed and supportive leadership includes the willingness to make changes in existing programs to improve student success as well as actively supporting a broad-based student success agenda. Both of these faculty members represent the willingness and active participation at their perspective institutions to assist students in achieving their goals. The new programs have interrupted the old way of instruction, but made positive differences in student outcomes. The extent of the institutions' commitment can be seen in the fact that they have sought additional resources to ensure the continuation of their best practices. Out of 15 institutions in the nation, both of these Leader Colleges were awarded the Gates Foundation DEI grant of \$743,000 to build upon student success efforts of Achieving the Dream.

### **Focus Group.**

The focus group from CC1 was comprised of seven faculty members. Support and commitment were demonstrated by helping students gain confidence, effective pedagogy and student engagement. One third of the faculty members commented that

teaching students to have confidence in themselves illustrated the faculty's commitment to student success. One such faculty member explained:

Helping them [students] to gain confidence in themselves, that's such a key thing; to be able to get them to realize that they can do this and teaching them how to be students. Because at community colleges, we have to really teach them how to be students. [Why?] Well, we [faculty] like to complain, 'they don't know how to do this; they don't know how to do that!' Well, they don't know, and in a community college that's our job really, to teach them how to research and how to study.

Half of the faculty members mentioned that teachers demonstrate commitment by, "Teaching the subject well, helping students and encouraging the student that they can succeed." Students have different learning styles and respond to different modes of instruction. Half of the faculty also agreed that to engage students, faculty must:

"Provide different learning opportunities. Some like the book, some like the PowerPoint, some would rather have it on the phone. Provide different things that engage different students."

An additional comment from the faculty about engaging students that the researcher found very profound and thought provoking was to:

[Engage students by] making sure that you know how to provide examples of where they will be using the material that is covered in the classroom, because they need to feel the sense of seeing themselves doing exactly what they're doing in the classroom in a professional field.

Engaging students appears to be one of the most prevalent problems in most community colleges. As an educator, the researcher concurs that students are more likely to respond to instruction that depicts their experiences. Students who are not engaged do not complete their studies. Engaging community college students in class is crucial because oftentimes these students have so many obligations, that the only place to engage

them is in the classroom. They are usually commuter students and lack the time to remain on campus after their classes.

Once students are engaged in the learning process, there is a greater chance of completion. Faculty members must commit to student success if they are to make a difference in the lives of students. One faculty member spoke about how the commitment and influence of her previous teacher led her to become a teacher:

The only reason that I became a teacher was because I had a teacher who helped me to believe in myself. So that's always been the goal that I've always had; that someday I'm hoping [in my classes] that I can have that impact on someone's life and they can become whatever they want; not just for my students, but for my colleagues or anybody to be an example, or try to be an example.

The desire of the faculty to help students: learn, lead, achieve, and understand, undoubtedly represents a commitment to help students achieve student success. Achieving the Dream believes that commitment from the leaders of the institution is vital to student success efforts. Support and commitment to student success were demonstrated by the participants through their willingness to aid students through various practices, programs, and courses. The practices included being attentive and present, advocating for AtD, changing the focus from student enrollment to student success, engaging students. Specific programs that were mentioned included SOAR, PREP, Summer Bridge, College Readiness Consortium, and Math Emporiums. A student success course ACA 111, was also discussed as an effective means to improve student success. Commitment, according to Gardner (1990) "requires hard work in the heat of the day; it requires faithful exertion in behalf of chosen purposes and the enhancement of chosen values" (p. 190). The leaders in this study exhibited the desire to change the focus from access to success for

students. They wanted to create a different outcome. Kouzes & Posner (2007), suggest five practices of committed leadership. Committed leaders: (1) model the way by setting an example and illuminating values; (2) inspiring a shared vision by conceiving an exciting future and mobilizing others in the vision; (3) challenge the process by taking risks and improving innovations; (4) enabling others to act by building trusting and collaborative relationships; and (5) encouraging the heart by fostering a spirit of community and appreciation. These attributes describe the level of commitment and support of the participants in this study.

### **Theme Two: Use of Data to Inform Decisions**

The second theme to emerge from the interviews and focus group discussions was the use of data to inform decisions as a practice to increase student success. According to Achieving the Dream, committing to collecting and analyzing data to improve student outcomes is referred to as “building a culture of evidence.” A primary commitment of colleges that join Achieving the Dream is to use data to interpret student success or areas of deficiency. For AtD member colleges, the focus changed from looking at student enrollments to examining data. Examining data led to the development of several initiatives that improved student outcomes. Participants expressed their points of view as follows.

#### **Chief Executive Officer.**

Analyzing data was a new concept for most community colleges. Most of the data that was collected was used for regulatory reporting and state compliance. The use of data helped the Chief Executive Officer realize his focus needed to change from student

enrollment to student success. Data also revealed to him how many students were testing in developmental education.

If I go back to prior to being involved in Achieving the Dream, I have to admit to you that I was more concerned and more interested in getting more students in, providing access, and so I would have to say we were very heavily focused on access and spent very little time on student success, and Achieving the Dream shifted that to where we realized we've got to do both, but we have to put a whole lot more effort into success as opposed to access.

The Chief Executive Officer further divulged that prior to examining the data, he was not aware that 98% of the students from his institution were testing into developmental education. He said, "As a President, you could have asked me before we collected the data, how many students who come here place into Developmental Education, and I would have had to tell you it's a lot, but I couldn't give a percent." He stated that he would have guessed that 70 percent of his students were testing into developmental education, not 98 percent.

According to the Chief Executive Officer from CC2, the use of data allowed the institution to increase retention and completion rates, while improving student services. He commented:

If we were involved with Achieving the Dream, we would learn how to use data and how to make decisions regarding our data. We feel that with Achieving the Dream, we would increase our retention rates, our graduations rates, and we would do a better job of serving students.

Data revealed that students did not perform well on the placement tests. As a result, both institutions implemented a review course, which helped to improve the students' scores significantly on the tests. CC1 went a step further and offered the

intervention in high school as an effort to ensure college readiness before the students entered college. The Chief Executive Officer from CC1 explained the rationale:

Well, when we looked at our data and saw 98% [*testing in developmental education*], we said if we wait till the student comes to us, that's too late. We've lost the battle; we've lost the war. So, we said, we're going to be renegade colleges, and to do that that really means you've got to go backwards and work with your K-12 districts.

This development gave birth to the creation of the College Readiness Consortium, which represented a partnership between CC1, the thirteen K12 districts, and the local university to improve student success.

The Chief Executive Officer from CC2 discussed how examining data led to the creation of a Compass review class at his institution:

What we found was, students coming back and taking it [Compass] the next day or the next week, were not doing any better. Looking at some data, we found with the placement test, we said, what if students could go through a refresher course online or in classes and spend whatever amount of time they would need refreshing in mathematics or refreshing in English? And what we found over the last four or five years, is those students who go through the refresher course, do much better on the tests than those coming in.

An advantage for CC1 is that they offer the Accuplacer review class in the high schools before students enter college, as well as for entering students. CC1 felt it would be advantageous to offer the review class to juniors and seniors while course content was fresh on their minds, recognizing that once students finish their math classes or a given school year, much of the material is forgotten.

CC2 offers a Compass Review exam at the campus once students are enrolled. An advantage for students at CC2 is that they can take the actual Compass exam twice

without being charged, unlike CC1, where the students are charged each time they take the placement exam. Students are not charged for the review classes.

Offering a review class for the placement exam proved to be an effective innovation at both Leader Colleges. The Chief Executive Officers credit the use of data for the development of the interventions. Examining data revealed more than enrollment; it revealed persistence rates, attrition rates, and completion rates. The data is used to create a culture of evidence of which student success efforts are working and which ones are not. Disaggregating the data allows the colleges to identify gaps in achievement between groups of students. Both of these institutions have adhered to recommendations of Achieving the Dream by collecting, tracking, and reporting data to examine student outcomes.

### **Leadership Team.**

The majority of the members from both Leadership Teams admit that prior to Achieving the Dream, they did not look at data to explain student outcomes. The following conversation from the Director of Institutional Effectiveness at CC2 illustrates how the momentum of asking for data grew once constituents realized its benefits. Prior to her arrival, the ability to retrieve data was very limited. Once she began sending out reports to departments, requests changed from basic to more involved. She explained:

The questions began very simple. Can you give me a list of students who are in this? Then the questions began to change. The questions that began to come at me were more in depth. I could tell by the questions coming into my office. Can you tell me if the students who participated in this are doing better than the students who did not? So over that first year when we started piloting some things, it just began to change. And what happened is really, in my mind, is word of mouth. You get instructors together and they're like, wow! You did what?

Wow! How did you do that? Well, we got our information from the IR office.’  
And after that first year, our requests increased 500%.

The institutions recognized that in order to become a culture of evidence, everyone within the organization needed to understand data and how to measure it. The following CC2

Team member commented:

One thing that I think as a leader that I did, and [you] remember I had institutional research under me, was I made sure that we raised the level of our data generation and put it out there; from the Board to the faculty for people to see how we actually were doing. I think the data thing was key because I think faculty recognized that data has something to say, and it’s important to see what it says, and then try to figure out why it says what it says, and then change where you can make it better.

Once the institutions understood the validity and advantage of collecting data, they were committed to the process. A Leadership Team member from CC1 explained:

From the beginning, whatever we did, we made a commitment to disaggregate the data and keep the data, and so we planned ahead for that.

You don’t just start collecting the data when you start the program, or you can’t do any kind of comparison.

A Team member from CC1 acknowledged that prior to AtD, they did not know what to do with data:

We always had data, we knew what data was, but we didn’t do anything with the data. So we found out; we learned that we needed to let that data drive our decision-making. And the other big change and I think this is why we have been so successful is that we didn’t set this out there as a by itself initiative, we embedded it into the culture that was already here. We took our existing committee structures and we changed the focus within those committees to support the Achieving the Dream initiative, which has allowed us to continue on in that line, so that all didn’t end just because the money ended.

Looking at data was such a new methodology, that one Team member from CC1 described looking at data as *transformational*. Prior to AtD, most institutions did not know how to use data except for regulatory reporting. Achieving the Dream recommends



the use of data to create a culture of evidence. Both institutions have embraced using data to inform decisions. A Leadership Team member from CC1 said that data was used to inform organizational decisions. She asserted that before any decisions are made, the data must be shown and examined to justify the decisions.

Both groups agree that Achieving the Dream has taught them how to examine and use data to make decisions. Examining data caused both institutions to pay more attention to students in developmental education to help facilitate their exit from developmental education.

**Faculty.**

Faculty members from both indicated that the use of data leads to improved student success. The following CC2 faculty member made an interesting comment about how using data eliminates guessing and reveals a true picture of student achievement.

Instead of being guided by well-intentioned hunches, we really started testing the data to see if our hunches were true or were the program or the teaching technique really making a difference. Could we demonstrate that students were in fact succeeding or just thinking that they should succeed? So I think that the data driven part of Achieving the Dream is a major focus.

In congruence with the previous CC2 Team member, this faculty member stated that once the faculty realized what the data could tell them, they began to increase their requests for data.

A faculty member from CC1 commented on how data changed the way they viewed pedagogy.

Every time we looked at data, we wanted more data. As faculty specifically, we never really looked at our data. But this was district-wide data that provided very compelling reasons why we needed to reexamine what we were doing as a faculty, as a department, as a district-wide discipline. That was one of the major

changes; but along with that, we knew we had to train faculty to look at data because we were a teaching institution. Our main emphasis was providing instruction in the classroom and it really was not about looking at data.

Faculty from both institutions concurred that their focus had shifted to become more aware of data and its uses. Achieving the Dream recommends that everyone within the institution uses data to prioritize actions. The fact that faculty has changed their focus to one of being faculty-centered speaks to their commitment to use data to make decisions about student outcomes.

### **Focus Group.**

Overwhelmingly, faculty members from CC1 spoke appreciatively about using data to inform decisions. They were asked to respond in simple and succinct sentences about how using data had affected them. Using data was something new and different. A faculty member commented: “We saw real substantive change. It showed things we could do and make happen. It was not the technique du jour.”

Analyzing data was an opportunity to gain knowledge that did not previously exist. According to one faculty member, “We have been enlightened. What we thought we were doing, we found out that we were not. Now the emphasis is on data to drive decision making.”

One faculty member took a different approach to using data, commenting that the institution should be careful not to automatically dismiss existing programs for the new: “With Achieving the Dream, there is more emphasis on data. However, we should look at data on effectiveness for existing programs and functions; and not just developmental education or new programs or functions.” Her comment suggests that perhaps there was

some reluctance to change. Or maybe she was the creator or coordinator of a former program that was replaced by an AtD initiative.

All of the faculty members embraced data as a way to understand student performance. They took active roles in collecting, measuring, and drawing conclusions from data. Faculty also began to research best practices from other institutions to determine if they might work at their own institutions.

One of the premises of AtD is that when faculty members notice that particular groups of students are not doing as well as others, they will be persuaded to address the impediments to student success (AtD, 2009e). The behavior of these faculty members exemplified the premise of AtD. According to AtD, “AtD colleges must be prepared not only to generate information, but to use it” (AtD, 2009d, p.1). AtD encourages the colleges to engage all internal stakeholders to research the data on student progress and achievement gaps. The actions of the participants demonstrated compliance to AtD’s recommendation of using data to better understand barriers.

### **Theme Three: Broad Engagement**

Through broad engagement administrators, faculty, and staff share the responsibility of student success and collaborate on efforts to improve student outcomes while identifying causes of achievement gaps among groups of students. Students and the external community are also included in discussions to increase student achievement. Broad engagement is crucial to improving student outcomes. “Stakeholder engagement is critical to the success of Achieving the Dream. Broad-based support for the college’s student success agenda and institutional change efforts requires engaging faculty, staff,

students, community members, and others in the change process” (AtD, 2009c, p.1).

Broad engagement means to connect and network with internal and external stakeholders to achieve student success.

The third theme to emerge from this study as a practice that led to improved student success was broad engagement. All stakeholders should participate in ensuring student success. Collaboration is expected across all disciplines because the ultimate goal is to improve student outcomes and increase student success. Participants expressed their points of view as follows:

**Chief Executive Officer.**

Broad engagement at CC2 included a mentoring program for students called the Advocacy Program. Broad-based participation included the Chief Executive Officer, faculty, and staff. The Chief Executive Officer from CC2 excitedly described the program:

We started a program called the Advocacy Program. The first year, we asked for volunteers who would be willing to take three students and be their advocate for a semester. Even I, the president, had three advocates the first year and all of our faculty and staff. We even had custodial workers become advocates [to direct students on campus]. That’s what I mean about being engaged as a college and changing the culture of the college. We started with about 60 or 70 volunteers. The second year into the program, we had 291 volunteers. So when we talk about getting broad engagement into student success, that’s a model we’ve implemented that has truly made a difference because everyone is involved.

Broad engagement at CC1 was achieved after an embarrassing incident of the Chief Executive Officer of the institution. It all began when the Chief Executive Officer decided to experience the registration process himself, as a student. It is an interesting story as told by the Chief Executive Officer:

So, I walked through our whole process [*accompanied by two students*] as if I was a new student and anywhere in the process where they tried to treat me differently, the students would say, that's not how you treated me or what you told me here. We learned a lot, but the last step before I could register for a class was to take the Accuplacer and I didn't prepare for it. I didn't think I was going to have to. And I turned to the two students and said, "I understand the challenges that you've got. We'll make some changes, we'll make it better, but I really don't need to take this test. I didn't prepare for it". And the two students said, "We didn't either; we didn't know we were going to have to take it. We didn't prepare for it, but we took it." And I [CEO] felt guilty, so I went in. I started working on math because I thought that was my strength. I got through ten questions and I knew I was heading for Developmental math, and I just turned to those two students and said, you know, I've really got to go to the bathroom.

The humiliation of almost testing into developmental education helped the Chief Executive Officer realize how broken the educational system was, which led to broad engagement with the community. He had previously been shocked when data revealed 98% of his students were testing into developmental education. Now he was shocked at his own performance. He knew something needed to be done and believed that the responsibility of improving the dismal outcomes of developmental education should include the community and the ISDs, and not solely his institution. His strategy was to coordinate a meeting that included superintendents from the local school districts, chamber of commerce members, bank presidents, the local university's president and provost, the Chief Executive Officer, and his VP of Instruction.

He had a *courageous* conversation with the external stakeholders. He told them that he had some data to share with them that was not very pretty. He shared the data about the 98% of students testing into developmental education and asked them not to point fingers because it was really a national issue. He shared with the group that even he, a President who has earned a Ph.D. and CPA, almost failed the placement test. He invited

everyone in the room an opportunity to take the Accuplacer test. There were no takers. He explained to them that it had been years since he had divided fractions. He also told the group that if they took the test, their results would probably have been the same as his. He further explained the problem:

‘One of the biggest problems that we’ve had in higher education is, we’ve done a very poor job of sharing information with our K-12 partners. Therefore, when I say college readiness, what do I mean? How do I measure it? How do I test it? So how can we expect our K-12 partners to know how we’re going to measure it? Out of that meeting came the College Readiness Consortium and a whole new community-wide effort to change. We had three superintendents of the largest districts in our city in that meeting stand up and say, this data is unacceptable; we’re going to change it.

This opportunity of broad engagement for CC1 led to collaboration of the institution and the community. It also led to a new initiative called the College Readiness Consortium.

The examples of broad engagement from both Chief Executive Officers demonstrated their zeal and passion for student success. These leaders recognized that improving student success will require support from internal and external stakeholders. According to Achieving the Dream, the college should secure input from external stakeholders to help identify achievement gaps and improve student success (AtD, 2010b). CC2 did not present any examples to the researcher of including external stakeholders in student success efforts, but that does not mean they are not doing so.

#### **Board of Trustees.**

The Board member from CC1 expressed that broad engagement is accomplished by including everyone in student success efforts. He asserted that if people were left out, they would become disinterested. He pointed out that in-service meetings are useful

opportunities for broad engagement because it is a platform where student achievement is addressed. He also pointed out that collaborating with the student government is a strategy that broadens engagement.

The CC1 Board member was the first participant to mention in-service meetings and the student government as contributors to student success efforts. Mentioning the student government was probably due to the fact that he supports and leads the student government organization and has done so for a long time. His recommendations aligned with Achieving the Dream's suggestion that colleges reach beyond the usual suspects and include other groups and individuals who may have important contributions to make (AtD, 2009a).

### **Leadership Team.**

While Achieving the Dream recommends including internal and external stakeholders in broad engagement, a member of the Leadership Team from CC2 acknowledged that more could have been done at her institution to include external stakeholders:

I think we struggled with community engagement. We did have some open forums, those types of things. We did have press releases, we did all of that, but I think we could have done more in that area. I think what any of us would have said back then was that we had a small work team and it was very difficult to try to do everything. So we probably didn't do as much of that as we should have. I guess my concern is that there are so few of us [core team] left.

An administrator from the Leadership Team of CC1 offered an interesting musical analogy of his role in broad engagement with the faculty:

I almost think of myself as (although I'm not musically inclined), a conductor of an orchestra where you've got the different sections of the orchestra: you know, you've got the strings and the horn, the drums, and then you bring together the

right people and focus them, like the math faculty and the Math Learning Emporium. So, I see myself as more orchestrating and making sure that the right teams are together and that they continue to move forward.

Another CC1 Team member confirmed how engaging the community led to the conception of the College Readiness Program. He stated:

We started a conversation with the superintendents, and we showed them data on their students who were coming to us. And we said, these are our students, not you're doing a rotten job. What can we do to better prepare these students? That's how we eventually started the College Readiness Program.

Since starting the College Readiness Program, fewer students are testing into developmental education. Almost every member of the Leadership Team from CC1 mentioned the institution's collaboration with the ISDs and local university as an example of broad engagement. Teamwork was mentioned by a few participants.

One person from CC2 mentioned a Tech Prep program which partners with community businesses to help train students for the workforce. There was not much mentioned by CC2 about broad engagement. According to the previous participant's comments, there does not appear to be much interaction with the community. Achieving the Dream asserts that effective stakeholder engagement can aid the institutions in implementing student success initiatives.

### **Faculty.**

A faculty member from CC1 asserted that broad engagement requires leaders who listen and works well with others because it requires building relationships within and outside the College. This faculty member's comment aligns with Achieving the Dream, because according to AtD, broad engagement begins by listening (AtD, 2009a).



Networking is a form of broad engagement. Networking with community businesses and schools is a way to promote AtD student success efforts. According to Gardner (1990), in a constantly changing environment, new and flexible networks become necessary. The former way of doing business may no longer produce results. AtD recommends including all stakeholders in the student success process because communities are affected by student success and student failure. Support from external stakeholders demonstrates they care about students and the future of our country. In congruence with AtD, Gardner (1990) reminds us that all leaders must spend part of their time building community.

#### **Theme Four: Systemic Institutional Improvement**

The fourth theme to emerge as a practice that leads to improved student success is systemic institutional improvement. Systemic institutional improvement encompasses the strategic planning process whereby goals are set based on data. In this stage, the programs and student services are regularly evaluated to determine their effect on student success, which directly influences budget allocations. The colleges are expected to continue to improve student success and sustain programs and practices that have proven to be effective, thus establishing a culture of continuous improvement. In order for student success to become systemic, efforts to improve student outcomes must be ongoing. Professional development is also a part of systemic institutional improvement as is the formation of committees to guide and monitor student success efforts (AtD, 2009). Participants expressed their points of view as follows.

**Chief Executive Officer.**

Systemic institutional improvement at CC1 includes a core team that works hard to disseminate information throughout the organization, as well as numerous initiatives previously mentioned. CC1 has realigned the math curriculum and reduced its number of sections. The Chief Executive Officer from CC1 discussed additional results of systemic institutional improvement:

We've increased persistence of students significantly. We've done some restructuring. We added a student success director and a dual credit director. We have five early college high schools since we started with Achieving the Dream. As a result, our dual credit in the high schools has grown from 90 students in 2001 to 3,500 students today in traditional high schools. We now have 1,500 students in our early college high schools. We have over 5,000 [total] students taking college level courses while they're still in high schools.

The Chief Executive Officer from CC2 explained how systemic institutional improvement helps sustain innovations:

I think the best way we can sustain them is two or three ways. Number one; be sure you have the appropriate policies in place to make sure it's sustainable. If you're implementing new practices, change your policies that make these kinds of things happen, then that will help to sustain it. Number two, you have to really take a look at reallocating some resources from other areas. Yes, budgets are tight, we understand budget cuts, I understand that, but I've also found over the years if president wants to get something done, they find the money to get it done.

Both of the Chief Executive Officers efforts are supported by Achieving the Dream that states the College should actively work to scale up and sustain programs and practices. Scaling up and maintaining programs require additional resources.

**Board of Trustees.**

Board members from CC1 and CC2 spoke about the benefit of leadership training and staff development in regard to systemic institutional improvement. The Board member from CC1 commented:

Because of staff development right now, when we need a person to step in as dean, we've got a lot of people qualified to become deans. And when I need someone to step in as interim president, we've got several people that can step in.

According to Achieving the Dream, the Colleges should provide opportunities to faculty and staff for professional development to help improve student success and close achievement gaps.

**Leadership Team.**

The majority of Leadership Team members from both institutions spoke about student success efforts that have been institutionalized and professional development opportunities for faculty and staff.

According to a team member from CC1, student success initiatives at his institution have become sustained through systemic institutional improvement.

We institutionalized. Like the College Readiness Consortium, it wasn't a fad; we institutionalized it. The Math Learning Emporium, it's a part of what we do. The PREP program, which is very similar to the College Readiness Initiative, but it's for students who come to our campuses rather than the high school students.

A team member from CC2 discussed professional development efforts at her institution:

I [VP] spent the majority of the [grant] money on professional development in one way or another training everybody in the college. I brought in a poverty expert who did programs on the culture of poverty with all the faculty and all the staff. Mandatory attendance was required for the program.

The CC1 Team member that coordinates the Leadership Program described how the program operates. The institution has found the program very beneficial in training new leaders:

We've had the Leadership Program now for seven years. We've had not just lower leveled people go through the program, we've had AVPs, Directors and all levels go through there, so that gives you a good feeling. They are given a project by the President to focus on. They have to work in teams and you get to see how people work together. You see the people that are ready for something more. So that helps you ask, "How about coming and working on this committee?"

A Team member from CC2 who was about to retire, explained that those who interact with students and who are in the classrooms are the ones who most need professional development training. According to AtD, professional development and the institutionalization of successful practices are crucial to student success.

**Faculty.**

Training faculty helps to sustain and institutionalize programs. The following faculty member from CC2 shared the training process of supplemental instruction, which led to the institutionalization of supplemental instruction at her institution.

For Achieving the Dream, I've been involved with our supplemental instruction program, so I coordinate and run that program for the college. I went to some conferences, learned about supplemental instruction, got the training and certification, and then came back and tried to implement it here. Really it's sort of a one-man show. I train the [SI] faculty, hire and train the tutors, and sit in on the classes sporadically.

A faculty member from CC1 discussed that restructuring math courses and applying for a grant allowed them to sustain improvement in math. After finding overlap, the math sections were reduced from four to three.

### **Focus Group.**

Professional development and training are aspects of systemic institutional improvement. Almost all of the focus group members associated Achieving the Dream with leadership, training, and development. CC1 has been very supportive of professional development opportunities for the faculty and staff. One participant commented, “When I think of Achieving the Dream, I think of leadership.” Another said, “Achieving the Dream opened up opportunities for professional development.” This group was very excited and grateful. In addition to professional development training, sustainability of student success efforts is a part of systemic institutional improvement. Both colleges have maintained initiatives that have contributed to improved student success such as the College Readiness Program and the Compass Review.

### **Leading with Passion**

The fifth theme to emerge as a practice was *leading with passion*. Leading with passion is expressed through enthusiasm, excitement, and a zealous commitment to student success. Passionate leaders inspire others toward a shared vision. These leaders inspired their organizations to commit and support Achieving the Dream and student success efforts. The enthusiasm of the leaders had a spillover effect on the organization. The participants seemed very excited about student success efforts and overwhelmingly credited their leaders for the successful practices and initiatives that led to improved student success and outcomes. When participants were asked why they believed their institution had achieved such a high level of student success, almost every interviewee credited the outstanding support and commitment of their leaders to Achieving the Dream

and its goal of increasing student success and achieving equity among students as the reason for their success. The following quotes are only a sample of expressions of leader appreciation from the participants in the study. The letters at the beginning of the quotes indicate the institution and leader.

The Chief Executive Officer from CC1 is described by the participants as active, supportive, present, inspirational, committed, a risk taker, one who instills passion, a great listener, and laid back. A description of the leadership characteristic will follow each quote. In the first quote, passion is demonstrated by the Chief Executive Officer's unwavering support of his organization by always being there for his team.

**CC1/CEO.** Our leader was present at all our student success core teams. When it was on the Achieving the Dream core team, he was at every meeting. At conferences, he will come and have breakfast. He'll be at the general session; he'll go to sessions with you. If you're giving a session, he will come and support you.

An attribute of a great leader is his or her ability to show support. Support is demonstrated by 'being there' for the team. It demonstrates that the leader cares and appreciates the efforts of the team. It is an illustration that he a part of the team.

Believability increases when the leader is personally involved (Kouzes & Posner, 2007).

In the next quote, passion is demonstrated by the inspirational ability of the leader:

**CC1/CEO.** "Well clearly, it hasn't hurt us at all to have an inspirational leader like our Leader. He has been willing to give us the go ahead, the blessing from the President's office to go out and make it happen, to take the risks, so to speak. That's been good."

Effective leaders inspire others. Inspirational leaders understand the needs of others and have their interests at heart. "Inspirational leaders breathe life into the hopes

and dreams of others and enable them to see the exciting possibilities that the future holds” (Kouzes & Posner, 2007, p. 18).

In the following quote, passion is inspired by the leader’s commitment to always participating and remaining involved:

**CC1/CEO.** Our Leader hasn’t missed one meeting in six years. One meeting in six years and we met regularly. We seldom missed a month, that’s committed leadership. And everywhere we went to any conferences or whatever, people would say, “How do you get your Leader involved?” When we did the presentations, he was on the presentation team. That’s committed leadership, but he, it doesn’t stop there because he instilled that passion for student success and that need for that leadership into his next level.

Exemplary leaders demonstrate commitment. Committed leaders are motivated; they believe strongly or want something very much (Gardner, 1990). In *Achieving the Dream*, committed leaders strongly believe in helping students succeed. Commitment from the leader also motivates others to pursue the goals of the organization.

The next quote describes a passionate leader as one who trusts people to do their jobs and one who listens to his constituents.

**CC1/CEO.** The Leader’s style of leadership is laid back. He believes in giving people a job and letting them do it, and supporting them in what they need. He’s probably one of the best listeners I’ve ever been around. It’s an amazing skill listening and you know most people listen with the thought of responding. He just listens with the thought of listening and understanding.

Extraordinary leaders are good listeners. Good listeners make people feel that the individual is genuinely interested in them. Active listening is a way to build trust (Zenger & Folkman, 2009).

The Chief Executive Officer from CC2 shared comments with the Vice President of Educational Support Services (EVESS), who coordinated *Achieving the Dream* efforts

at CC2. These leaders were described as being excited, visionary, and influential. In the following quote, passion is demonstrated in the excitement and enthusiasm of the leader to student success.

**CC2/VPESS.** Our AtD leader was always excited about Achieving the Dream and what the possibilities were. She had the vision that we could be better. At every opportunity, she waved the banner. I think because she selected people to work on the core team who were as committed as she was, they carried the banner back to their particular areas. She lived and breathed Achieving the Dream and what it could do.

Extraordinary leaders lead with high energy and vitality (Roueche, et al., 1989). This high level of energy inspires followers to also become excited. Their enthusiasm sends a very positive message to the rest of the organization, which inspires the constituents from excitement to action.

Passion was demonstrated in the ability of the leader to influence others.

**CC2/VPESS.** “In my view she was the most influential administrator during the Achieving the Dream years, without a doubt.”

The ability to inspire others is at the core of leadership. An inspired leader exemplifies a zeal and passion for their endeavors. The zeal becomes contagious to the rest of the organization. When people are inspired, they become motivated to model the behavior of the leader (Kouzes & Posner, 2007).

In the following quote, by allowing the organization to try different practices and programs, the leader demonstrated passion for student success.

**CC2/CEO.** I saw him as a great visionary, a great visionary who allowed us to do and try the things that we have been able to do and try. When you would say something to him about being a visionary, he’d say, “no, he’s just out and about and get’s ideas from other places and brings them here. Some of that may be true, but I still think some of it came from his own mind.



Great leaders are visionaries. A visionary leader must know the immediate and future of the college and how it will look once it reaches that future. A visionary communicates his or her plans with others so that the vision becomes shared. “A vision is more than one person’s perspective” (Roueche et al., 1989, p. 110).

The admiration of the followers for their leaders is very evident in their comments. Each quote describes attributes of a transformational leader. Transformational leadership is the premise upon which AtD was created. Transformational leaders are supportive, inspirational, great listeners, committed, and visionary. The behavior of these transformational leaders has inspired their organizations to become more focused on student success and work toward improving student outcomes. Transformational leaders value people. Transformational leaders inspire trust and a leader who spires trust is “valuable in bringing about collaboration among the constituency” (Gardner, 1990, p 33). The leaders show unconditional support and commitment to AtD as well as to their staff. When leaders show enthusiasm about AtD, it “stirs the fire of passion in others” (Kouzes & Posner, 2007, p. 18).

## **Summary**

Support and commitment to improve student outcomes and achieve equity, the use of data to inform decisions, broad engagement, systemic institutionalization, and leading with passion proved to be integral parts of leadership practices at Leader Colleges for the Chief Executive Officers, Board of Trustees, the Leadership Team, and Faculty. These leaders recognized that these practices are significant factors in the equation of student success. The collaboration of the internal and external stakeholders led to the

creation of successful initiatives that helped improve student performance and equity, especially in developmental education. Reviewing data was a new concept for both colleges, but they embraced it and allowed it to change the culture of the college to a culture of evidence where decisions are data informed. Without the engagement and support of internal and external stakeholders, it is likely that these institutions would not have achieved the level of success that they are experiencing. All of the participants seemed genuinely concerned about student success. They managed to bring their various disciplines together and work as a team for the greater good, to help students succeed. There was shared vision and leading by example. The leadership in all of the groups was transformational. The leadership was so transformational that the participants felt it was necessary to credit their Presidents with the success of Achieving the Dream at their institutions. According to Burns (1978), “The premise of this [transformational] leadership is that, whatever the separate interests persons might hold, they are presently or potentially united in the pursuit of ‘higher goals’, the realization of which is tested by the achievement of significant change that represents the collective or polled interests of leaders and followers” (p. 425).

### **Research Question Two**

What was the Perception of the Achieving the Dream Coach and Data Facilitator Regarding the Leadership Practices that Contributed to Increased Student Success?

Coaches (C) and data facilitators (DF) perceived that the leadership practices demonstrated at each institution served to increase student success, however, concern was

expressed about the quality of institutional research at each institution. The CC1 data facilitator stated that overall the practices worked.

I think on the whole, their interventions worked, and when they were finding that something wasn't working as well as it should, they made mid-course corrections. For example, if they weren't able to scale it up as fast as they thought they should, and they were still going into a boutique program or something, they were able to say 'what kinds of things do we need to do to make this something that can reach all potential students that need this?' There was hardly ever a failure of any kind, and even when there were things that fell short, they seemed to learn from them and they took an attitude all the way through, the whole organization that was 'well, we can learn from this, we can do better.

Student success efforts at CC1 were not wasted on fruitless endeavors. Programs that did not work were discontinued. According to Drucker (1999), that which does not produce should be abandoned to enable the resources to be used elsewhere.

When asked about his perceptions of practices that led to improved student success, the coach from CC1 commented:

It's not so much the practices, but one has to appreciate how the college came to identify those areas or challenges that the college had and then determined what interventions would best be used to help students achieve their goals.

The response from the coach from CC1 was uniquely different from the others. He felt that even though the practices worked, more attention and appreciation should be given to the institution's leadership and the steps that were taken to achieve improved student success, rather than the practices themselves. He expressed great admiration for the leader's commitment in determining problematic areas, finding solutions, and collaborating with both internal and external collaborators to achieve student success.

The coach from CC2 seemed pleased with the institution's progress. When asked about his perception of leadership practices at CC2, he responded:

Very positive. I learned things that I can use at my other four institutions; and I did that a lot of times. I would tell them the good things that were going on at the other institution and give them examples. So I was able to plant ideas from them to other institutions and from other institutions to them.

The data facilitator from CC2 commented that some practices worked and some did not. She added that she was very proud of the success CC2 made. She remarked, “Not everything was successful. I think that’s important to note, but they kept on moving and when something was shown not to be as successful, you stop it and try something new.”

Overall, the coaches and data facilitators were satisfied with the practices from CC1 and CC2.

### **Theme One: Commitment and Support to Improve Student Outcomes and Achieve Equity**

The coaches (C) data facilitators (DF) expressed their points of view about support and commitment to improve student outcomes and achieve equity in the following quotes. The data facilitator from CC1 contended it is crucial for the Chief Executive Officer to demonstrate commitment:

**DF/CC1.** Committed leadership starts with the President, of course. It’s also a significant role for people to lead wherever they are. So, for example, the vice president has roles to play, the faculty has a role to play. The President will be a unifying force to pull it all together and set an overall direction, which the President did so magnificently, to help keep them focused on what is critically important and set the tone.

According to the data facilitator this Chief Executive Officer demonstrated commitment by leading his institution and keeping everyone focused on student success.

**C/CC2.** Essentially what a president has to do is he has to be the major advocate for student success and for measuring student success. And the two major arms in the community college for achieving student success are the academics and the student services or student development.

The Chief Executive Officers in the study became advocates for Achieving the Dream and student success. This was demonstrated in their attitudes and actions toward student success initiatives. The Chief Executive Officer from CC2 participated in his institution's Advocacy program as an illustration of his commitment to improving student outcomes.

**DF/CC2.** The Vice President of Educational Support Services was the person that was really in charge of the initiative at that institution. She came to really want to dig deeper, she came with a passion for student success, and I think that passion was really what drove the initiative. Her participation was one of the reasons that CC2 did so well, but it was a desire to assist more students to be successful.

Commitment and support according to the data facilitator, was demonstrated through the leader's desire to lead and passion for student success. This attitude aligns with the premise of Achieving the Dream.

## **Theme Two: Use of Data to Inform Decisions**

Each coach mentioned an inadequate Institutional Research (IR) department for both institutions. Although the coaches and data facilitators perceived that data use to inform decisions had value, they also expressed that the use of data could be problematic at times. The coaches expressed their points of view about using data to inform decisions in the following quotes:

**DF/CC1.** Part of the problem with IR has been that their sole focus and their training and background had been on reporting just for compliance purposes. But the issue within the data realm is that frankly that some of the data were problematic. It's that garbage in, garbage out phenomenon. Some of this stuff just wasn't clean data. The third Issue related to that is the mechanisms for providing the reporting were archaic and problematic and it's really hard to get data pulled together quickly. They still have data issues, but they are working on it.

The Data Facilitator also mentioned that data had indicated a growing gap between male and female students.

The ability to disaggregate data drives Achieving the Dream. The coach from CC2 commented on a former problem at CC2 and how it was resolved.

**C/CC2.** I thought that we had a real difficult time getting the student database set up, and the President helped us by finding somebody who was competent. And once we got the right competent person in there, she was just a miracle worker. She worked with the faculty; she worked with the department heads, with the division deans, and with the vice presidents.

According to the coach, data is very crucial to Achieving the Dream, however archaic systems and inadequate staff will not meet the needs of student success efforts.

### **Theme Three: Broad Engagement**

Broad engagement presents opportunities to enlist the participation and collaboration of others in Achieving the Dream student success initiatives. There was a consensus of positive reviews from the coaches about broad engagement at each institution. The coaches credited the institutions for using every opportunity possible to engage others in student success efforts. The leaders, including faculty and staff, shared Achieving the Dream and student success at meetings, assemblies, convocations and town hall meetings. The Data Facilitator from CC1 spoke very excitedly about broad engagement at CC1:

**DF/CC1.** Oh my goodness, you should see what they do! Their first start of every academic year they have a college-wide assembly. The President talks about things, and gives them information about what's happening. They have other speakers. And this is everybody; this is not just faculty. This is staff, this is administration, this is everybody. They share this information. The President and others go around the various campuses and talk to different groups of people so that they're getting the information out there. They've worked with the community and people in the K-12 schools, all kinds of things, and they're

starting to see some real impact because of the way things are changing in the numbers.

According to the data facilitator, the leaders at CC1 demonstrated broad engagement by articulating the vision of student success in every forum possible, while including internal and external stakeholders. According to Achieving the Dream, collaboration is a key to improving student outcomes.

The data facilitator from CC2 expressed a positive perception of the progress made by CC2 in broad engagement:

**DF/CC2.** I think that's one of the secrets to their success. And that is, that the president and the vice-president were 100% behind the initiative and they brought it up whenever possible: during orientations, during faculty convocations, and they brought it up to the Board of Trustees. It wasn't just something that is done by a couple of people in IR or whatever; it became part of the college culture. It's on their website. It may have been written in their school newspaper or other correspondence.

The above statements confirm that in adherence to Achieving the Dream, CC2 made public declarations about Achieving the Dream and student success efforts, including posting it on their website and other media outlets.

#### **Theme Four: Systemic Institutional Improvement**

Systemic institutional improvement encompasses strategic planning, program evaluation, sustainability of student success agenda, and professional development. There was a consensus between coaches and data facilitators that the institutions had demonstrated aspects in all areas of systemic institutional improvement. The coaches made remarks in regard to student success efforts and professional development. The coach from CC2 commented that the institution had made vast improvements in

achievement for minority and majority groups. He explained that was the reason they had received awards and were accepted as a leader college.

The data facilitator from CC1 commented on the development of a Leadership Academy at the institution. The Leadership Academy focuses on leadership strategies that help improve student success.

### **Summary**

The perceptions of the coaches were very positive. Even though the colleges are still having challenges with data, the coaches believe that since joining Achieving the Dream, the colleges have made great progress in the transformation to using data to making student success a priority to improve student outcomes. The colleges have engaged internal and external stakeholders while exemplifying committed leadership from the President, Board, administrators, and faculty.

Prior to AtD, the colleges were not using data to inform their decisions, nor had they even heard of the concept. Achieving the Dream knew early on that the main problem for most colleges would be institutional research because their IR departments were inadequate for data research. Their IR basically functioned as departments for regulatory reporting for governmental agencies. According to AtD, (2009), typical challenges for institutional research include: (a) compliance reporting (state, federal, accreditation), (b) technical barriers (minimal access to data systems), (c) role confusion (which department should do the work), and (d) influence (IR is not perceived as important). Even with the challenges, the coaches believe these institutions have a bright future ahead of them. The data facilitator from CC1 commented that the institution was



making an amazing difference in an area that is challenged economically and academically. The data facilitator from CC2 stated that CC2 had really bloomed and it was rewarding to watch the culture change.

### **Research Question Three**

What Obstacles to Change were Encountered by Stakeholders During Innovation Sustainability?

The leadership practices reported by the participants appeared to contribute to the community colleges progress in ensuring student success. However, both colleges experienced certain obstacles that either prevented or slowed the process. The data suggests that both colleges have been able to overcome some of these obstacles; however some remain and need to be addressed. The following is a description of the obstacles that emerged from the data including: (a) resistance to change; (b) high percentages of students enrolled in developmental education; (c) funding reductions; (d) lack of communication; (e) high enrollments with reduced staff; (f) orientation too long; (g) inability to retrieve reliable data; (h) skepticism; (i) engaging students in the Advocacy program; and (j) working as a team.

#### **Resistance to change.**

Resistance refers to opposing and striving against change.

The Chief Executive Officer from CC2 experienced resistance during innovation sustainability of student success practices. He commented, “We had some resistance, and I will tell you today, we still have some resistance and that’s just being honest about it.” The Chief Executive Officer explained that because he supports innovation, creativity,

and cutting edge interventions, some of the faculty and staff thought it was a Presidential fad. Eventually, according to the Chief Executive Officer, Achieving the Dream was embraced by most of the faculty and staff.

In contrast to the Board member from CC1 who did not experience any obstacles, the Board member from CC2 was not as fortunate. He commented that there was resistance to change and stated, “There’s just a natural aversion to change.” He explained that the resistance was compounded by limited resources and a reduction in staff. Like every other community college, their state funding has been significantly reduced, yet the enrollment continues to climb.

Resistance to change was experienced at both CC1 and CC2. Leaders must remain cognizant that resistance is a normal reaction to change. According to Gardner (1990), innovation can be seen as a disruptive force that shatters normalcy. People resist things that interrupt their routine because it requires making a change. Kouzes & Posner (2007) assert “disruptive change demands significant commitment and sacrifice, but the positive feelings associated with forward progress generate momentum to ride out the storm. (p. 205) O’Toole (1996) offers some hypotheses of why people resist change. The first is that change does not feel natural and people want stability. Secondly, perhaps the teachers and staff resisted change because preconditioning had not occurred. They did not know enough about Achieving the Dream or had not seen any real evidence that it worked. The good news is that most of the constituents at both institutions have embraced Achieving the Dream because they have evidence that it works.

### **High percentage of students enrolled in developmental education.**

The obstacle for most community colleges is the disproportionate amount of students testing into developmental education. Students are entering college unprepared, especially in math, reading, and writing. The obstacle according to the Chief Executive Officer from CC1 was that 98% of enrolling students were testing into developmental education. An additional problem was how not to blame other educational institutions for their failure. His solution was to form partnerships with the school districts, the local university, and community businesses. The collaboration between the various entities resulted in new student success initiatives. The College Readiness Initiative and PREP are initiatives that reduced the percentage of students testing into developmental education at CC1.

### **Funding reductions.**

Every institution in this country including community colleges is experiencing budget cuts and reduced funding from the federal and state governments. One of the most prevalent obstacles mentioned by participants from the Leadership Team at CC1 was the fear of reduced funding. A team member said, “Well, I think it’s like with any grant, you know, the grant’s here and you got the money, but it goes away.” At least one third of the participants agreed with that concern.

Team members from CC2 were also concerned about reduced funding. Anxiety still exists about what will happen when the funding ends. Reduced funding was mentioned by a third of the participants. Faculty also expressed concern about decreased funding.

To assist member institutions implement student success initiatives, Lumina Foundation gave each AtD college a total of \$450,000 for the first five years. After the AtD grant, 15 colleges were awarded the Bill and Melinda Gates DEI grant that ranged from \$300,000 to \$743,000 over three years. The DEI grant was to be used to assist the continuation of AtD initiatives. The two institutions in this study both received the maximum grant award.

Most colleges today including the community colleges in this study are desperately seeking grants and other funding sources to supplement the deficits. The participants expressed concern because they have seen evidence that their student success efforts are making a difference in the lives of students, and they want those successful initiatives to continue. Other strategies to help fray costs include reallocating resources and restructuring the organization. The benefit of restructuring is that it causes institutions to reexamine current functions and procedures (O'Banion, 1997). In relation to the reduced funding is the fact that the colleges are not able to hire enough staff commensurate with their growth. Until the economy improves, colleges will have to become even more innovative and resourceful to continue to survive while improving student success. The participant who found it difficult to keep her staff focused on new ideas was probably concerned that without additional staff, some of the innovations may have to wait. Based on the current state of affairs, no relief is in sight.

#### **Lack of communication.**

Communication is a means of having discussions, expressing thoughts and exchanging knowledge about something. According to participants at CC1

communication was lacking and needed to be improved. One person from the CC1 Leadership Team mentioned the problem of a lack of communication as an obstacle to student success, commenting, “if there was anything that I would have done differently, although I don’t even know how, it is to ensure that everyone was better informed.”

A concern about communication was also mentioned by a faculty member from CC1. Her comment was, “I think we could have done a better job disseminating information.” The lack of communication appears to be an area of concern for CC1.

The primary obstacle expressed by the focus group at CC1 was also the lack of communication. One participant said things would have been smoother if there had been, “maybe a little bit better communication across committees so that we weren’t stepping on each other’s toes or so that we could collaborate with one another.”

Other focus group members mentioned that those who did not serve on committees did not receive much communication about what was going on and sometimes notes from the meetings were not readily available online. Half of the participants voiced the concern about communication.

The lack of communication was presented as a major concern at CC1. CC2 did not express concern about communication. The majority of the complaints about communication did not come from the Chief Executive Officers, Board members, or Leadership Team. Most of the concerns about communication were from the faculty. They felt like they were out of the loop, especially those who were not a part of a committee. They found it very frustrating not knowing what was going on with Achieving the Dream efforts, and yet they were encouraged to embrace the innovations

and interventions produced by its efforts. Communication must be an open process and one that encourages participation from all its constituents (Roueche et al., 1989, p. 157).

Poor communication can cause resistance and reduce participation. There was no indication in the study of who the resisters were. Roueche et al., (1989) continue by explaining that people in the organization must be kept informed to establish and maintain an open line of communication. Sharing information and facilitating open communication builds trust and decreases territoriality (Blanchard, 2010). Even though broad engagement was encouraged and demonstrated, according to participants, more needed to be done internally with faculty and staff.

#### **High enrollments with reduced staff.**

The most significant obstacles mentioned by the Leadership Team at CC2 were high enrollment and a reduced staff. They have not been able to increase staff to match the growth and as a result they are experiencing high turnover. The reduced staff is related to reduced funding by the state. At least two people mentioned the difficulty of being able to focus. One member stated it was difficult for teachers to focus on anything new when they are teaching more students, more hours, and more classes. The other team mentioned that it has been difficult to keep her staff focused on student success because they are so overworked. She commented, “It is really hard now because we are so short staffed in terms of the number of people we need to serve. One of the staff members said to me the other day, “Our infrastructure is built to handle 8000-9000 students, and we aren’t prepared for what we have” This member also said because her staff is

overworked, “we have in our area a record number of people turn in their resignations.” This problem is a major concern at CC2 and was mentioned by half of the participants.

**Orientation too long.**

Orientation includes many students and can become confusing if not organized effectively. One Team member mentioned that the orientation at CC1 needs to be changed because it is too long. Her comment was, “They need to change the orientation. The way we do orientation with the students needs to be changed.” According to this participant, there should be two orientations, a general one when the students come in, and another one later with specific advice on career choices. She commented that the process needs to be simplified because students really do not know what their career interests are. A specialized orientation at a different time would help to illuminate options.

**Inability to retrieve reliable data.**

Reliable data is critical to AtD efforts to improve student success. Reliability refers to the ability to reproduce the same results. CC2 Team participant commented, “I think the biggest challenge, personally for me, is data. The challenge has been getting reliable data and getting it to the people who need to use it.” His complaint included that other members of the organization were making changes to the data, causing it to be unreliable. According to this participant, each time he tried to retrieve data, the results were different. According to this participant, data retrieval has improved since the earlier days of AtD.

**Skepticism.**

At CC1 a few members of the Leadership Team mentioned suspicion or skepticism as an obstacle. One comment however was, “I think a lot of times there was a certain amount of suspicion. What were we doing and why were we doing it?”

Initial skepticism was also mentioned as an obstacle by a few participants at CC2. Some thought it was the ‘flavor of the month’ while a few others thought AtD would lower pedagogy standards at the institution.

One focus group member shared that some believed Achieving the Dream lowered their standards for pedagogy.

One way that leaders can reduce suspicion is by leading by example. When leaders demonstrate sincere commitment, it sends a message to the organization that the practice, program or initiative is important to the success of the organization. After witnessing the success of AtD student success interventions, suspicion was reduced.

**Engaging students in the Advocacy Program.**

Students perform better when they are engaged; and those who are not engaged are least likely to succeed. One faculty member from CC2 commented that engaging students in the Advocacy Program has been an obstacle. This was also confirmed by the researcher in the document review process. Participants from the focus group also mentioned the difficulty of engaging students. According to the faculty members in this study, they must work really hard to engage students.

Findings by the Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE, 2008) remind us that academic and social support along with high expectations will



promote student success if students engage in them. The following comment by Tinto (as cited in CCSSE, 2008) offers a description of community college students while explaining why it is important to engage them:

Lest we forget, most community college students work and/or attend part-time. For many, going to college is but one of a number of obligations. The time they spend on campus often is limited to attending class. When class is over, they typically leave to attend to family and work. As a result, the classroom may be the only place students interact with one another and with faculty, the only place where they can be effectively engaged in learning. If high expectations and high support are not experienced in the classroom, they are not likely to be experienced elsewhere (CCSSE, 2008, p.2).

Research by Baker, Roueche, & Gillett-Karam (1990) assert that teachers must do more than examine content and curriculum and study test scores, they must make the right choices about how to teach, especially the community college student. They suggest that if students are unmotivated, research should be done to examine what teachers are doing who are motivating and engaging their students.

### **Working as a team.**

Teamwork is critical to the success of Achieving the Dream. According to Blanchard (2010), teams make better decisions, can execute quicker than traditional hierarchies, and can do more to enhance creativity than persons working alone. AtD teams and committees evaluate student success practices to ensure effectiveness.

A few people mentioned that it was sometimes difficult to work as a team or committee. One participant explained, “there was some territoriality. So getting through that and getting everybody to cooperate was difficult”. One member stated that a challenge was bringing everyone together to design the same goals with different teams.

Though most participants expressed obstacles, some did not, as expressed by a team member from CC1, “there was organizational commitment and funding to achieve their goals, so we did not experience any obstacles.”

## **Summary**

This chapter presented the findings from this multiple case study based on the qualitative data that was collected through (1) in-depth interviews of Chief Executive Officers, Board of Trustees members, the Leadership Team, faculty, and Achieving the Dream coaches, (2) a focus group, and (3) analysis of internal narrative and financial reports to AtD and articles from various publications. An attempt was made to examine leadership practices at Achieving the Dream Leader Colleges that led to increased student success.

The findings that emerged from the study revealed five themes as practices that led to improved student success. The same themes were apparent in all of the questions. The themes corroborated with the principles of Achieving the Dream. The responses were heavy on commitment, which is the most crucial of all of the principles.

Several obstacles were mentioned including: resistance, the substantial number of students testing in developmental education, inadequate institutional research, funding, suspicion, and insufficient communication. The coaches gave favorable reports on the community colleges and were optimistic about their futures.

The next chapter includes a thorough summary of the study findings, conclusions, the study implications, recommendations for practice, and recommendations for further research.

## **CHAPTER SIX: SUMMARY, IMPLICATIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS**

*“It’s true that you can lead a horse to water and that you can’t make him drink, but you can paint pictures of cool, refreshing, inviting liquid and make him thirsty”* (Roueche, Milliron & Roueche, 2003, p. 84).

### **Introduction**

This study focused on the leadership practices at two Achieving the Dream Leader Colleges that sustained innovation to improve student success. Specifically, the study investigated what leadership practices were employed by the Chief Executive Officer, Board of Trustees, Leadership Team, and Faculty that improved student outcomes. The study gathered data demonstrating the commitment, support, actions, and concerns of the leaders as well as the perception of the Achieving the Dream Coaches of the leadership practices that improved student achievement.

This final chapter includes a review of the study and a discussion of the major findings of the study and their implications. Recommendations for further leadership practices are offered at the end of the chapter.

### **Summary of the Study**

Few community colleges are successful in reducing student attrition rates. The literature review revealed that less than half of all community college students complete their associate’s degree within six years. Over 40 percent of college students who earn more than 10 credits never complete either a two-year or four-year degree. At community colleges over 70 percent of students who enroll say they expect to obtain a bachelor’s degree, but only 23 percent receive one (Venezia, Kirst, & Antonio, 2003). In the U.S.,

African American and Latino 12<sup>th</sup> graders read and do math at the same level as white 8<sup>th</sup> graders (Venezia, Kirst, & Antonio, 2003; Haycock, 2001). According to McCabe (2000) improving student outcomes has been unsuccessful for most community colleges. The literature review also addressed the achievement gap that has persisted in community colleges in the U.S. because of the high attrition rates of the students. According to Miller (1995), there are two compelling reasons to reduce the gaps: education is essential for long-term productivity and competitiveness of the U.S.; and if minorities are to enjoy a good quality of life they need knowledge and skills close to those held by whites. The literature review also revealed that of the 70% of high school students that graduate, only 32% graduate college ready. The literature exposed the fact that the challenge of community college attrition can only be improved by leaders who commit to (1) improving student outcomes; (2) seeking innovative and sustainable practices; and (3) transforming their institutions systemically to create a culture of success (Lumina, 2008). Through sustained innovations the two Achieving the Dream Leader Colleges presented in this study have been able to increase student success.

Achieving the Dream Leader Colleges has been able to demonstrate innovation sustainability through specific practices that led to improved student outcomes. The researcher felt it was essential to investigate the practices demonstrated by the Achieving the Dream Leader Colleges to understand how their success was achieved. The researcher also examined the level of commitment and support from the leaders of the institutions, which are the primary criteria for all member colleges of Achieving the Dream.

The purpose of the study was to determine what the leadership practices were that sustained innovations that led to improved student outcomes and how they were sustained as demonstrated by the leaders of the community college, the Chief Executive Officer, Board of Trustees, Leadership Team, and faculty. The researcher also sought to know of any challenges that were experienced during the period of sustainability.

This multi-case study was conducted using qualitative research methods. In this study, Achieving the Dream Leader Colleges who are ‘highly recognized’ describe the practices that have contributed to improved student achievement. The researcher conducted the study over three months during the summer of 2011. Thirty-four interviews were conducted at the participant colleges with Chief Executive Officer, Board of Trustee members, members of the Leadership Team, Faculty, a focus group, and the coaches and data facilitators who had been assigned to these community colleges to offer guidance and support in their quest to improve student outcomes. Data analysis revealed explanations and common themes about the leadership practices at each community college.

### **Research Questions**

Three research questions guided the study:

1. What leadership practices were employed by the following to sustain innovation that led to increased student success?
  - A. The Chief Executive Officer
  - B. The Board of Trustees
  - C. The Leadership Team

#### D. The Faculty

2. What was the perception of the Achieving the Dream coach and data facilitator regarding the leadership practices that led to increased student success?
3. What obstacles to change were encountered by stakeholders during innovation sustainability?

### **Findings**

Findings from the study indicated the following leadership practices were employed by the Chief Executive Officer, Board of Trustees members, Leadership Team, and faculty to sustain innovation that led to student success: (a) commitment and support by the Chief Executive Officer and senior leaders of the institution; (b) using data to inform decisions (c) broad engagement between all stakeholders, internal and external, to affect change; (d) systemic institutional improvement; and (e) leading with passion.

The findings from the leadership practices align somewhat with Achieving the Dream's five-step process for increasing student success illustrated in figure 5. AtD's five steps are: (1) commit; (2) use data to prioritize actions; (3) engage stakeholder; (4) implement, evaluate, improve; and (5) establish a culture of continuous improvement. According to AtD, by following these steps, colleges should be able to build effective and enduring evidence-based institutional practices that improve student success (AtD, 2009a, p. 10).

```
graph TD; S1[STEP 1  
Commit.] --> S2[STEP 2  
Use data to  
prioritize  
actions.]; S2 --> S3[STEP 3  
Engage  
Stakeholder.]; S3 --> S4[STEP 4  
Implement,  
evaluate,  
improve.]; S4 --> S5[STEP 5  
Establish a  
culture of  
continuous  
improvement.]; S5 --> S1;
```

Support From Achieving the Dream

Investments by the college

STEP 1  
Commit.

STEP 2  
Use data to  
prioritize  
actions.

STEP 3  
Engage  
Stakeholder.

STEP 4  
Implement,  
evaluate,  
improve.

STEP 5  
Establish a  
culture of  
continuous  
improvement.

- Completion of developmental courses and progression to credit-bearing courses
- Completion of gatekeeper courses, particularly first college-level or degree-credit courses in math and English
- Completion of attempted courses with a 'C' or better
- Persistence from term to term and year to year
- Attainment of credentials

164

## **Leadership Practices that led to improved student success**

### **Commitment and Support.**

According to AtD's Five-Step Process, committed leaders are willing to make the necessary changes in policy and practice, and are committed to investing the resources needed to improve learning and completion for all students, simultaneously achieving equity in student outcomes across all racial boundaries and income groups (AtD, 2005d). Leaders show their support by personifying the values, vision, and mission of the institution. According to findings from the study, leaders committed by: (a) being present; (b) listening to the team; (c) creating a shared vision; (d) developing leaders; (e) ensuring policies contribute to student success; (f) ensuring resources are available or reallocated to improve student success; (g) being advocates for students and responsive to their needs by creating and supporting initiatives to help reduce the number of students in developmental education and achieve equity; (h) evaluating programs to determine their effectiveness (i) demonstrating a passion for student success; (j) assessing students needs; and (k) engaging students.

Having a leader who listened seems to have meant a lot to the followers. According to participants, they felt that what they said mattered. O'Toole (1995) confirms the value of listening by stating, "Arguably the brightest leader this nation has known found it prudent, if not necessary, to listen to his subordinates and to encourage their opinions" (p.31). Active listening is one of the most important abilities of a leader because people sense that the leader is genuinely interested in them and not trying to get something from them (George & Sims 2007; Roueche et. al., 1989). In addition to



listening, O'Toole (1995) adds that the best leader is one who has the sense to choose good men to do what is needed and demonstrate the restraint to leave them alone to do it. The leaders in this study communicated the new vision of student success to the entire organization and enlisted their help and support to ensure students were helped. Committed leaders understand the vision is not just his or hers, but must be shared. In a shared vision the Chief Executive Officer places value on the follower's involvement in achieving success. When visions are shared, they attract more people, maintain high levels of motivation, and endure more challenges than when they are not shared (Blanchard, 2010; Kouzes & Posner, 2007; Gardner, 1990; Roueche, Baker & Rose, 1989). Research has shown that collaboration is critical for the adhesion within organizations. "When leaders engage others in planning and experimenting, they encourage collaborative effort and help build the infrastructure that is needed to support the change" (Blanchard, 2010, p. 229). The leaders from these Leader Colleges recognized that everyone is needed for the 'team'; therefore they created core teams. The teams are built around a common purpose and mutual respect (Kouzes & Posner, 2007, p. 223). Zenger & Folkman (2009) argue that it is a myth of leadership that leaders should devise strategies alone and then come back to announce them to the organization. The truth is "today the most sophisticated leaders recognize that they are not expected to have all of the answers or to define the strategy of the organization by themselves" (p. 195).

The Board of Trustees is primarily responsible for oversight and governing the community college. They are charged with ensuring that the community college carries out its mission (Obanion, 2009). It is also their responsible to ensure resources are

available to ensure student achievement. Sometimes policies must be changed or resources reallocated to achieve student success. Peter Drucker (1999) goes as far as to say, in order to free resources from being committed for something that no longer contributes to performance or produces results, that policy must be abandoned. Drucker goes on to say “if people are committed to maintain yesterday, they are simply not available to create tomorrow” (p.74).

Since these colleges became members of Achieving the Dream, various initiatives have been implemented to help students succeed including: Compass Review, Student Orientation, Advising and Registration (SOAR), Student Advocacy Initiative, College Readiness Initiative, Summer Bridge/Project Dream Program, Pretesting Retesting Educational Program (PREP), and Math Emporiums. Prior to these interventions, many students struggled and eventually dropped out. These colleges have restructured and redesigned courses to help the students pass through the developmental education sequence faster. The faculty members have researched best practices and modified them to fit their institution’s population. The implementation and success of these initiatives speak to the commitment of the Chief Executive Officers, Board, administrators, and faculty.

### **Using Data to Inform Decisions.**

Step two of AtD’s Five-step process affirms the use of data to identify gaps in student achievement. Findings from the study indicate participants find data useful for the following reasons: to (a) build partnerships; (b) measure outcomes; (c) improve instruction; (d) see evidence; (e) raise levels of awareness of significance; (f) make

organizational and management decisions; (g) determine how many students are enrolled in developmental education; (h) determine if students are succeeding; and (i) evaluate program effectiveness. According to the coaches, the institutional research departments for both colleges were insufficient and inadequate for the needs of Achieving the Dream. Traditional IR departments have been used for compliance and regulatory reporting to the state or for accreditation reporting. Achieving the Dream requires the ability to disaggregate the data. Only then can one get a true picture of what is working and what needs improvement. Most colleges who have joined AtD have had to enlarge their IR departments. Most of the data colleges were able to generate were snapshots. One of the team members of this study complained about the inability to retrieve current data. He stated that every time he tried to retrieve data, the numbers were different because someone had changed something in the system. This causes frustration and unclear data to be retrieved. According to AtD, colleges need to understand how critical the role of IR and IT are to improving student success (AtD, 2009d). A premise of AtD is creating culture of evidence. A culture of evidence cannot be formed without data. The colleges in this study are still having challenges with data. One of them hired their third IR Director earlier this year. The other, according to the coach, is trying to improve the challenges with data, but has found a way to work around IR. There is definitely room for improvement at both colleges in the area of IR.

### **Broad engagement.**

The third step in AtD's process is engaging stakeholders. Broad engagement means to engage all stakeholders to improve student success. It includes collaborating

with those within the organization as well as those within the community to work towards student success. Both of these colleges have been successful in forming partnerships with the community and local businesses. Community colleges train the workforce, therefore it is imperative to form relationships with the community enlisting support and offering support. Findings from the study indicated the Chief Executive Officers and leaders of the institutions had demonstrated broad engagement by: (a) creating a mentoring program; (b) sharing information at college-wide assemblies; (c) creating community partnerships; (d) sharing information about Achieving the Dream at every forum until it became part of the culture; and (e) by posting AtD on their websites and in the school correspondence. It was through engaging the external community that led to partnerships with the high schools. That partnership led to the creation of a College Readiness Initiative at CC1 that is given to juniors and seniors in the high school as practice for the placement exam. According to Achieving the Dream, engagement means more than just communicating with faculty to get their buy-in. It means that they will become a part of the culture change and work toward the goals of AtD of helping students succeed (AtD, 2009c). Though most of the faculty embraced AtD, findings from the study indicated the existence of challenges to faculty engagement. They included: (a) resistance, (b) believing AtD was a fad, (c) suspicion, (d) an aversion to change, and (e) concern that AtD lowered standards of instruction. Though there were some initial naysayers, most participants agree that most internal stakeholders have embraced Achieving the Dream because they have witnessed the success of it. Roueche and Roueche (n.d.) assert that engaging faculty and staff in organizational goal setting requires patience. The tricky

thing about leadership, they purport is, “the leader’s ability to motivate and inspire faculty and staff to care as much about organizational success as does the leader” (p.1). Kouzes and Posner (2007) stated that collaboration is a crucial competency for achieving and maintaining high performance. Collaboration helps to build the infrastructure that is needed to support change (Blanchard, 2010).

Upon learning that 98% of the students at one institution placed in developmental education, the Chief Executive Officer knew it was imperative to have the collaboration of the ISDs, the local university, and local business leaders to address the problem. So he had a ‘courageous conversation’ with external stakeholders to garner their support and offer his to them to help students succeed. Had he not had the courage to request a meeting, his college would still be experiencing excessively high enrollment in developmental education, perhaps higher than the 98%. But he took action and enlisted support from internal stakeholders and external stakeholders. The data shared with the school leaders and the community led to a commitment by those external stakeholders to partner with the college to help students succeed. The Chief Executive Officer asked the external stakeholders to serve on an advisory committee for the Achieving the Dream effort at his college. As stated earlier, this collaboration led to the creation of the College Readiness Initiative, which was led by key faculty members who formed a developmental education council to seek best practices and modify existing courses. They began to ‘own’ their involvement (AtD, 2010e). By becoming fully engaged in the process, the commitment was internalized and institutionalized. Kouzes and Posner (2007) remind us, that “by bringing people together, sharing lessons from success and getting personally

involved, leaders reinforce in others the courage required to get extraordinary things done” (p. 309). Kouzes and Posner refer to it as creating a spirit of community. The courageous conversations of these leaders enticed the rest of the organization to embrace change.

### **Systemic institutional Improvement.**

Step five of AtD’s process to increase student success is to establish a culture of continuous improvement taking appropriate steps to institutionalize interventions. Both Leader Colleges have implemented various initiatives to improve student success. Findings indicate the following initiatives and interventions have been sustained and institutionalized: College Readiness Initiative, Summer Bridge Program, Pretesting Retesting Educational Program (PREP), Math Emporiums, Compass Review, Student Orientation, Advising and Registration (SOAR), and a Student Advocacy Initiative. Evaluation is ongoing, but data suggests the initiatives are working. An examination of internal documents report a substantial improvement in retention and persistence rates because of the new interventions designed to improve student success. Figures 1 and 2 support findings of initiatives success, revealing that the College Readiness Initiative has reduced the number of students enrolled in three developmental education classes and secondly, more students are graduating college ready. Figure 4 illustrates the difference SOAR makes in student retention. In Figure 5, a combination of SOAR and a student success course helped to reduce the achievement gap between African males and Anglo males. These initiatives show evidence that these innovations work well.

Findings from the study also revealed the following manifestations as indications of a culture of continuous improvement: (a) the colleges made improvements in minority and majority groups; (b) leaders encouraged the development of faculty and staff training and professional development; and (c) ladders to success were created (Appendix B).

### **Leading with passion.**

Leading with passion is an aspect of commitment. Findings indicated leaders demonstrated their passion for student success by: (a) always being present and active at meetings; (b) supporting efforts of others; (c) being an inspiration for others; (d) showing concern for the organization; (e) trusting the constituents; and (f) listening. Leading with passion shows the human side of an individual. People like knowing their leader is human no matter how brilliant he or she is.

Humanistic leaders according to O'Banion (1997) exert certain attributes. They: (a) put the needs of the students first; (b) restructure individual courses to fit the needs of their students in order to produce successful student outcomes; (c) change the entire culture of the institution to help students succeed; and (d) show students they care about their futures. These leaders demonstrated all of these attributes in their zeal for student success. George & Sims (2009) purport passion is an important quality for Chief Executive Officers. According to them, "The infectiousness of your leadership must be apparent to the people, or you can't charge forward. If you don't love it, you can't fake it" (p. 154). In congruence with George and Sims (2009), Zenger & Folkman (2009) report that the most powerful tool leaders have is the use of emotion and adds that the ability to get people excited and passionate about a

new direction is a very important skill. “People need to know the logic, but they also need to feel the value and power of a new strategy” (p. 189). Leading with passion is rooted in transformational leadership, in which the leader seeks to satisfy and arouse higher needs in the follower, while engaging the full person (Baker et. al., 1990; Burns, 1978; Roueche et al., 1989; Bass and Bass, 2008; Tichy, N. & Devana, M., 1986).

### **Perceptions of Coaches and Data Facilitators Regarding Leadership Practices that Led to Increased Student Success**

Overall, the coaches were very pleased with the leadership practices that led to improved student success. Findings indicated the following perceptions of the coaches and data facilitators in regard to leadership practices that led to improved student success at both institutions: (a) some worked, while some did not; (b) the institutions changed direction if they found an intervention did not work; (c) institutions still have challenges in IR; (d) institutions made tremendous progress in AtD; and (e) institutions should be appreciated for engaging all stakeholders to make a difference in student success in addition to their practices.

The coaches and data facilitators agreed that new innovations typically come with challenges. However, they believe these two institutions have made great progress and are headed in the right direction toward improving student success. In response to what they believed the future looks like for the institutions, the coaches responded positively.

The Data Facilitator from CC1 responded:

“Well, it certainly looks brighter than it did seven years ago. I think because of the work they’ve done with the College Readiness Consortium, all of the school districts are much more focused on helping students be college ready.”



The Data Facilitator added that the institution is making a big difference in the region. She commented, “I think that CC1 will have a significant positive impact on the region’s economic viability as well. It will help raise the bar because more people will have a higher level of education.”

In regards to the future for CC2, both coaches were also very positive. The Data Facilitator had this to say:

I think the future is bright. I mean, I think that that institution will never go back to the way it was. I think their eyes have been opened to the value of data and data used in decision-making and how it can help make better decisions. I think that the institution is on an upward path and hopefully will remain.

The coaches and data facilitators remain in contact with the institutions and visit at least once a year to assess their progress.

### **Obstacles to Change Encountered by Stakeholders during Innovation Sustainability**

Though it is normal to have some obstacles to change, they can be detrimental to the organization if not addressed. The Leader Colleges in this study were not exempt from obstacles during innovation sustainability. Findings from the study revealed the following obstacles to change: (a) resistance to change; (b) high percentages of students enrolling in developmental education; (c) funding reductions; (d) lack of communication; (e) high enrollment with reduced staff; (f) orientation too long; (g) inability to retrieve reliable data; (h) skepticism (i) engaging students in Advocacy Program; and (j) working as a team.

According to the participants, most of the obstacles with the exception of funding reductions and high enrollment with reduced staff have been improved. These two

obstacles are affected by reduced federal and state funding, which to date have remained unchanged, with no signs of improvement.

## **Conclusions**

Based on the findings of the study, several conclusions can be presented. Leadership practices begin with commitment to Achieving the Dream by the Chief Executive Officer and other senior administrators of the college. The creation of a core team is imperative to student success. There is a need to change policies and reallocate resources to ensure programs, practices, and processes produce positive outcomes for students. Some programs and practices such as orientation and the elimination of late registration should be mandatory to improve student success.

The College Readiness Initiative at CC1 has seen significant results preparing students to become college ready. Making SOAR mandatory at CC2 has also proven to be very effective in improving retention rates. The Compass Review (CC2) and PREP for the Accuplacer (CC1) have both shown positive results in reducing the number of students enrolling in developmental education.

The future of these institutions looks promising as they continue to evaluate and monitor the effectiveness of the interventions that are proving to increase student achievement.

The practices used by the institutions to enhance student achievement reflect the Five-Step process of Achieving the Dream to some extent. The one step that appears to be absent relates to step four, implementing, evaluating, and improving.

Finally, it can be concluded that in addition to the practices, a strong passion for

leadership is essential in improving student achievement.

As documented by MDRC (2011), the two colleges in this study have documented proof that their interventions are moving the needle on student success and building a culture of evidence.

### **Implications for Practice**

Given the findings of this study, the following implications for practice are recommended:

#### **Improve Communication.**

At CC1, discussions with the Chief Executive Officers, Board of Trustees members, and the Leadership Team made no reference to a lack of communication. However, faculty from the focus group as well as individual faculty indicated communication was inadequate at times during that period and could have been better. Even though there were town hall meetings and website postings, faculty still felt out of the *loop*. They indicated that committee members knew much more about what was going on with Achieving the Dream initiatives than they did. Communication is integral to the lifeline of an organization because it allows the organization to run smoothly. Resistance to change may be encountered when there is a lack of information disseminated within the organization. Without honest, passionate, and empathetic communication, people create their own information about change, and rumors begin to serve as facts (Blanchard, 2010, p. 232). O'Toole (1996) reminds us that the best communication forces one to listen. He asserts, "Information is power, but it is pointless if hoarded; power must be shared for an organization or a relationship to work" (p.45).

The researcher recommends improved communication between committees and the departments they represent.

### **Improve Institutional Research Efforts.**

CC1 has found alternative ways to retrieve data. This is acceptable only if it is an interim solution, but not if concerted efforts are not being made to correct whatever the problem is with their Institutional Research (IR) department. CC2 has experienced such turnover in their IR that very little information exists on their website. When the researcher attempted to find data, she was connected to the NCES website. One of the participants complained about the data not being current and the fact that it offers more snapshots than useful data. ‘Having information technology and institutional research functions with sufficient capacity to meet increased demand for information are essential to the success of any effort to implement the Achieving the Dream improvement process’ (AtD, 2009d, p.1). It is recommended therefore, that efforts continue to improve in this area for both institutions.

### **Seek Ways to Maintain Administrators and Support Staff.**

CC2 is experiencing substantial attrition by administrators and support staff. With substantial increases in enrollment and minimal staff, efforts to improve student success may be negatively affected. The researcher suggests the continuation of seeking external sources of funding to hire additional support. The problem may require organizational restructuring or a reallocation of current resources to alleviate overburdening the staff. Overtaxing leads to burnout. This could lead to the employee leaving the organization. According to one participant, people are overwhelmed with the level of work expected of

them, so they quit. She commented, “My staff is overworked and, as a result of that, we have in our area a record number of people to turn in their resignations.” The participant genuinely wants to help students, but is frustrated by the current situation. She added,

I think that people are seeking other choices. It is more work than you can handle in a day, and I guess the frustration is that...my staff is filled with people who really want to do a good job and I think they find it frustrating to do the job they want to do, because of the lack of human resources.

Due to these findings, the researcher recommends that the institution seek the means to improve this situation.

#### **Offer Detailed Degree Plan.**

A participant from CC1 revealed that she thinks having a more detailed degree plan would encourage students to persist in college. Currently, the students receive schedules each semester. Her comments were, “Not just a degree plan, I’m talking about a schedule and a plan. I’m talking about semester-by-semester; that’s how you live. You know, that’s the way the For-Profits do it.” Her reference to For-Profit institutions referred to the fact that when students enroll there, they are given an in-depth degree plan that encompasses their courses from start through graduation. While there is limited information about the effectiveness of such a detailed degree plan, it appears to make a difference at the For-Profits and may be worth pursuing at community colleges.

#### **Implications for Future Research**

The study focused on answering the three guiding research questions:

(1) What leadership questions were employed by the Chief Executive Officer, Board of Trustees, Leadership Team and Faculty to sustain innovation that led to increased student success; (2) What was the perception of the AtD Coach and Data Facilitator regarding the

leadership practices that led to increased student success; and (3) What obstacles to change were encountered by stakeholders during innovation sustainability.

Further, the study focused on perceptions of administrators, faculty members, and coaches only. Also, participant colleges were members of Achieving the Dream. In addition, the study was completed at one period of time, which limits the scope of findings. Therefore, the following areas for further study are recommended: (1) A survey of other community colleges might generate information about the process and practices used to improve student success; (2) studies addressing long term gains may illuminate why some colleges are able to sustain student success, while others are not; and (3) future studies may include students to gain insight about effective practices that lead to improved student success.

## **Appendix A**

### **Consent Form**

#### **Examining Leadership Practices at Achieving the Dream Leader Colleges: A Multiple Case Study**

You are being asked to take part in a research study examining leadership practices at Achieving the Dream Leader Colleges that led to student success. You are being asked to take part because you are a CEO, board member, faculty member, leadership team member, coach, or data facilitator who was actively involved in Achieving the Dream (AtD) at the college during the five years of AtD prior to obtaining leader status. In addition, faculty members must have been directly impacted by a practice that improved student success. Please read this form carefully and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to participate in the study.

**What the study is about:** The purpose of this study is to ascertain particular leadership practices employed through sustained innovation that led to increased student success.

**What I will ask you to do:** If you agree to be in the study, I will conduct an interview with you if you are the CEO, board member, faculty member, leadership team member, coach, or data facilitator. If you are a faculty member and agree, I will also conduct a focus group with you. The interview will include questions about your role as it relates to student success, how you became involved in Achieving the Dream, changes your institution has made since becoming a member of Achieving the Dream, sustained innovation used to achieve student success, how you were involved and influenced student outcomes, practices used to reduce the achievement gap between student groups, practices used to reduce developmental education, obstacles to change experienced during the innovation sustainability, perceptions of leadership practices, and your recommendations for innovation sustainability to increase student success. The semi-structured interview will take about an hour. The focus group will also be semi structured to allow open discussion among participants. The focus may take up to 90 minutes. With your permission I would like to tape record the interview and focus sessions.

#### **Risks and benefits:**

I do not anticipate any risks to you participating in this study other than those encountered in everyday life. The minimal risk includes access to confidential data by the transcriber in addition to the investigator. The risk is minimal because you will not be identified by name on tapes or hardcopy data. There are no benefits to you. Other colleges and leaders will benefit by learning what leadership practices you employed to improve student success at your institution in order to improve student success at their institutions.

**Your answers will be confidential.** The records of this study will be kept private with access limited to the researcher and a transcriber. In any released public report, no identifying information about you will be included. All research records will be kept in a locked safe. All audio recordings will be destroyed immediately after the transcriptions are completed. Consent forms and written transcriptions will be destroyed three years after the completion of the study.

**Taking part is voluntary:** Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. You may skip any questions that you do not want to answer. If you decide to take part, you are free to stop or withdraw at any time. If you decide not to participate, it will not affect your current or future relationship with The University of Texas or your college.

### **Examining Leadership Practices at Achieving the Dream Leader Colleges: A Multiple Case Study**

#### **If you have questions:**

The researcher conducting this study is Linda P. Lebile. Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions at [lplebile@aol.com](mailto:lplebile@aol.com). If you have questions about your rights as a participant in this study, you may contact the Office of Research Support (ORS) at (512) 471-8871 or email at [orsc@uts.cc.utexas.edu](mailto:orsc@uts.cc.utexas.edu).

Statement of Consent: I have read the above information, and have received answers to any questions I asked. I consent to take part in the study.

Your Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Your Name (printed)

\_\_\_\_\_

In addition to agreeing to participate, I also consent to having the interview/focus group audio-recorded.

Your Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of person obtaining consent \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Printed name of person obtaining consent \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_



## **Appendix B**

### **COMMUNITY COLLEGE ONE - LADDERS TO SUCCESS**

#### **Lead with Passion**

Embracing the learning college philosophy and  
Establishing core values

#### **Access and Opportunity**

Knowing who we serve  
Examining the data  
Building college readiness

#### **Develop Team**

The Leadership Academy  
The Teachership Academy  
Student Leadership Academy  
Staff Training and Development  
Faculty Development  
Faculty and Staff Development  
Centralized Training Repository  
Trustee Development

#### **Develop Community**

United Blood Services  
Recycled Computers  
Electrical Journeyman  
Service Learning

#### **Evaluate**

CCSSE  
Noel Levitz  
Employee Climate Survey  
Audits

## **Appendix B - CC1 Ladders to Success Continued**

### **Respect Legacy and Culture: and Resolve to Make a Difference**

Salute to the Arts

Endowed Scholarships

Hispanic Outlook Magazine

ALASS

### **Strategic Partnerships**

Pre K-12 (Public and Private)

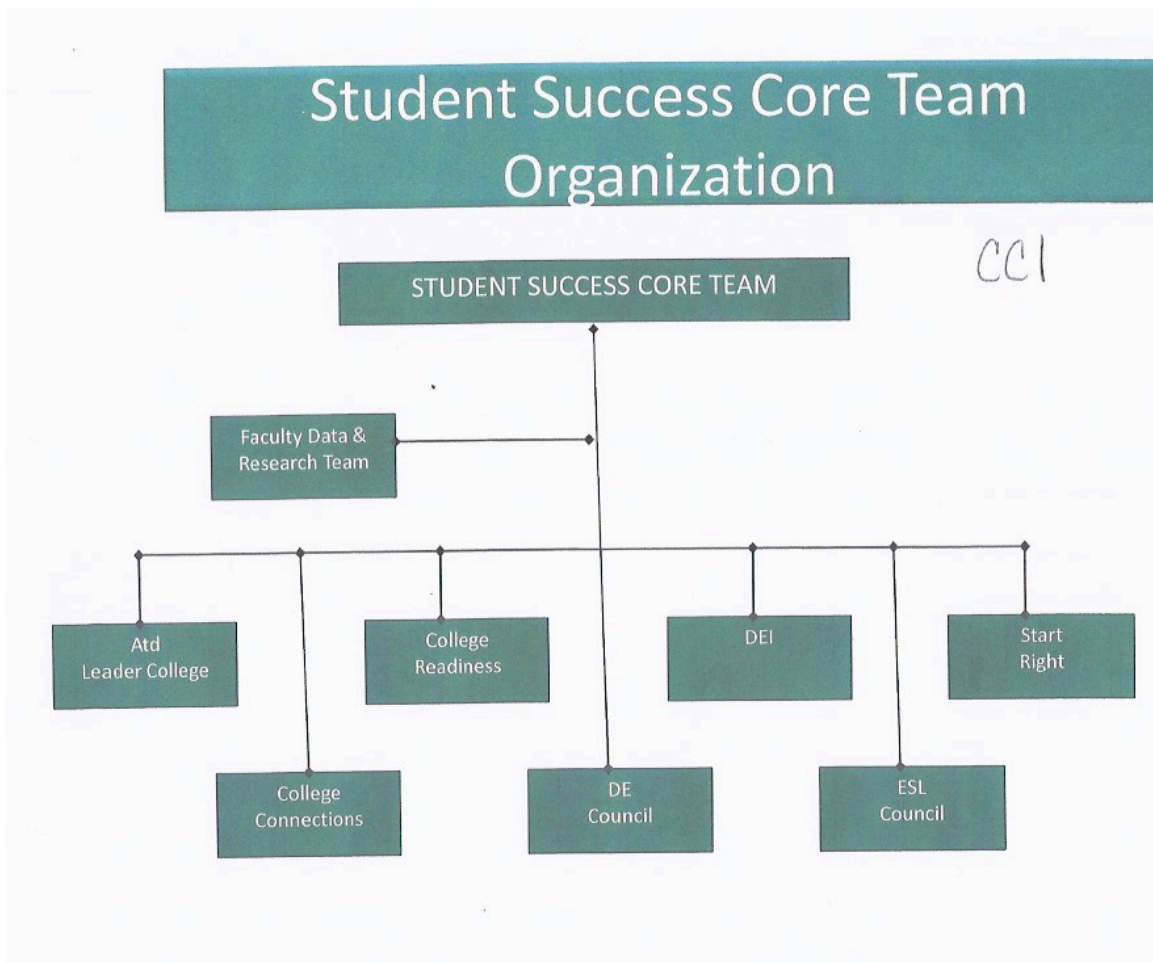
Universities

Business and Industry

Workforce Board

City/County Government

## Appendix C



## References

- AACC (2000). AACC position statement on remedial education. Retrieved from <http://www.aacc.nche.edu>
- AACC (2008) Community college. Retrieved from <http://www.aacc.nche.edu>
- AACC (2011). American Association of Community Colleges fast facts. Retrieved from <http://www.aacc.nche.edu/AboutCC/Pages/fastfacts.aspx>
- Alfred, R., Shults, C., Jaquette, O., & Strickland, S. (2009). *Community colleges on the horizon: Challenge, choice, or abundance*. Lanham, MD: Rowan & Littlefield Education.
- Antonakis, J. Avolio, B.J. & Sivasubramaniam, N. (2003). Context and leadership: An examination of the nine-factor full-range leadership theory using the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 14 (3), 261-295. Retrieved from <http://www.sciencedirect.com.ezproxy.lib.utexas.edu/science>
- Astin, A. (1993). *What matters in college: Four critical years revisited*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Astin, A. W. & Astin, H. S. (2000). *Leadership reconsidered: Engaging higher education in social change*. Battle Creek, MI: W.K. Kellogg Foundation.
- AtD (2005a). About achieving the dream overview. Retrieved from <http://www.achievingthedream.org>
- AtD (2005b) About achieving the dream goals. Retrieved from <http://www.achievingthedream.org>

AtD (2005c). Five-step process for increasing student success. Retrieved from

<http://www.achievingthedream.org>

AtD (2005d). Four principles of institutional improvement. Retrieved from:

<http://www.achievingthedream.org>

AtD (2005e). About leader colleges. Retrieved from <http://www.achievingthedream.org>

AtD (2005f). At a glance. Retrieved from

<http://www.achievingthedream.org/Portal/Modules/936b3989-b5a5-4cf9-ac87->

(2007). Institutional research and the culture of evidence at community colleges.

Report No. 1 in the Culture of Evidence Series (April).

AtD (2009a). Field guide for improving student success. Author.

AtD (2009b). Setting up success in developmental education: How state policy can help community colleges improve student outcomes. An Achieving the Dream Policy Brief (June).

AtD (2009c). Engaging faculty in the achieving the dream initiative. Achieving the Dream: Community Colleges Count Brief.

AtD (2009d). Strengthening institutional research and information technology capacity through Achieving the Dream. Achieving the Dream: Community Colleges Count Brief.

AtD (2009e). Faculty and administrator data use at Achieving the Dream Colleges: A summary of survey findings. Achieving the Dream: Community Colleges Count Brief.

AtD (2010a). Promising practices: 2010 Leader colleges. Retrieved from

<http://www.achievingthedream.org>

AtD (2010b). Achieving the dream leader college information. Retrieved from

<http://www.achievingthedream.org/Portal/Modules/9c361933-46e2-4180-b02f-9553a9c664ce.asset?>

AtD (2010c). Press Releases. Retrieved from

<http://www.achievingthedream.org/newsroom/pressreleases.tp>

AtD (2010d). A tale of two students: Equal treatment is not enough. Achieving the

Dream Kickoff Institute Manual.

AtD (2010e). Collaborating to create change: How the Community College Improved the

Readiness of its incoming students through Achieving the Dream. Achieving the Dream: Community Colleges Count.

AtD (2011a). Where we work. Retrieved from <http://www.achievingthedream.org/>

AtD (2011b). About Achieving the Dream. Retrieved from

<http://www.achievingthedream.org>

Auguste, B.G., Cota, A., Jayaram, K., & Laboissiere, M.C.A. (2010). Winning by

degrees: The strategies of highly productive higher-education institutions.

Retrieved from

[http://www.mckinsey.com/client-service/Social\\_Sector/our\\_practices/Education/Knowledge\\_Highlights/~/media/Reports/SSO/Winning\\_by\\_degrees\\_Report\\_12Nov2010b.ashx](http://www.mckinsey.com/client-service/Social_Sector/our_practices/Education/Knowledge_Highlights/~/media/Reports/SSO/Winning_by_degrees_Report_12Nov2010b.ashx)

- Bailey, T. & Morest, V. M. (2006). *Defending the community college equity agenda*. Baltimore, MD: The John Hopkins University Press.
- Baker, G A., Roueche, J.E., & Gillett-Karam, R. (1990). *Teaching as learning: Profiles of excellence in the open-door college*. Washington, D.C.: The Community College Press.
- Bass, B.M. (1985). *Leadership and performance beyond expectations*. New York, NY: Free Press.
- Bass, B. (1990). From transactional to transformational leadership: Learning to share the vision. *Organizational Dynamics*, 18(3), 19-31. Retrieved from <http://scholar.google.com.ezproxy.lib.utexas.edu>
- Bass, B.M. & Bass, R. (2008). *Bass handbook of leadership: Theory, research, and managerial applications*. New York, NY: Free Press.
- Beach, L. R. (2006). *Leadership and the art of change*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Blanchard, K. (2010). *Leading at a higher level*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: FT Press.
- Boal, K.B. & Hooijberg, R. (2000). Strategic leadership research: Moving on. *Leadership Quarterly*, 11(4), 515-549. Retrieved from <http://www.sciencedirect.com.ezprozy.lib.utex.edu/science>
- Boyce, M. E. (2003). Organizational learning is essential to achieving and sustaining change in higher education. *Innovative Higher Education*, 28(2). Retrieved from <http://www.springerlink.com.ezproxy.lib.utexas.edu/content/u2446t77m5351286/fulltext.pdf>

- Braganza, A., Awazu, Y., & Desouza, K. (2009). Sustaining innovation is challenge for incumbents. Retrieved from <http://docserver.ingentaconnect.com.ezproxy.lib.utexas.edu>
- Burns, J. M. (1978). *Leadership*. New York, NY: HarperCollins.
- Cabrera, K. E. (2010). Sustaining success toward closing the achievement gap: A case study of one urban high school (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from ProQuest. (AAT 3403531)
- Carpenter, R. (2008). The College of Southern Nevada: A journey toward a shared vision. In Roueche, J. E., Richardson, M. M., Neal, P. W., & Roueche, S. D. (Eds.), *The creative community college: Leading change through innovation* (pp. 115-132). Washington, DC: The Community College Press.
- CCRC (2007). Building a culture of evidence for community college student success: Early progress in the achieving the dream initiative. Retrieved from <http://www.mdrc.org>
- CCRC (2008). Evidence-based decision making in community colleges: Findings from a survey of faculty and administrator data use at achieving the dream colleges. Retrieved from <http://www.mdrc.org>
- CCSSE (2008). Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE). High expectations high support: Essential elements of engagement. Austin, TX: The University of Texas at Austin Community College Leadership Program.



- Census (2011). Quick facts. Retrieved from  
<http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/totals/48/48141.htm>
- City-Data (2010). City Economy. Retrieved from [www.city-data.com](http://www.city-data.com)
- Clark, R. E., & Estes, F. (2002). Turning research into results: A guide to selecting the right performance solutions. Atlanta, GA: CEP Press.
- Collins, J. (2001). *Good to great*. New York, NY: Harper Collins.
- Commerce Economic Development (2010). Top Employers. Retrieved from  
<https://edis.commerce.state.nc.us>
- County Information Project (n.d.). County profile. Retrieved from  
[www.txcip.org/census/profile](http://www.txcip.org/census/profile)
- Creswell, J. (2009). *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage
- Davis, J. R. (2003). *Learning to lead: A handbook for postsecondary administrators*. Westport, CT: Praeger.
- Denzil, N.K. & Lincoln, Y.S. (2000). *Handbook of qualitative research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- DePree, M. (1989). *Leadership is an art*. New York, NY: Doubleday.
- Diamond, R.M. (2005). The institutional change agency: The expanding role of academic support centers. *To Improve the Academy: Resources for Faculty, Instructional and Organizational Development*, 23. Retrieved from  
<http://thenationalacademy.org/readings/instchange.pdf>

- Dooris, M.J., Kelley, J.M., & Trainer, J.F. (2002). Strategic planning in higher education. *New Directions for Higher Education, 116, Fall*. Retrieved from <http://www3.interscience.wiley.com>
- Drucker, P. F. (1999). *Management challenges for the 21st century*. New York, NY: HarperCollins.
- Dyer, C. (1995). *Beginning research in psychology: A practical guide to research methods and statistics*. Cambridge, MA: Blackwell.
- Flores, P.A. (2010). Narrowing the achievement gap: Factors that support English Learner and Hispanic student academic achievement in an urban intermediate school (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from ProQuest. (AAT 3403727)
- Gardner, J. W. (1990). *On leadership*. New York, NY: The Free Press.
- George, B. & Sims P. (2007). *True north*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Glesne, C. (2006). *Becoming qualitative researchers: An introduction*. Boston, MA: Pearson.
- Goals (2000). Goals 2000: Educate America Act. Retrieved from <http://www2.ed.gov/legislation/GOALS2000/TheAct/index.html>
- Gonzales, J. (February 9, 2011). Achieving the dream produces little change at community colleges. *The Chronicle of Higher Education*. Retrieved from <http://chronicle.com/article/Achieving-the-Dream-Produces/126304/>
- Gray, S.J. (2010). The achievement gap and sustainability: A case study of an elementary school bridging the achievement gap (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from ProQuest. (AAT 3403572)

- Green, J.R. & Forster, G. (2003). *Public high school graduation and college readiness rates in the United States*. Education Working Paper No. 3. Retrieved from [www.manhattan-institute.org/pdf/ewp\\_03.pdf](http://www.manhattan-institute.org/pdf/ewp_03.pdf)
- Haycock, K. (2001). Closing the achievement gap. Retrieved from [http://www.ascd.org/publications/ed\\_lead/200103/haycock.html](http://www.ascd.org/publications/ed_lead/200103/haycock.html)
- Hockaday, J. & Puyear, D. (2000). Community college leadership in the new millennium. Expeditions Issues Paper No. 8. Retrieved from <http://www.aacc.nche.edu>
- Johnson, K., Hays, C., Center, H. & Daley, C. (2004). Building capacity and sustainable prevention innovations: A sustainability planning model. Retrieved from <http://www.sciencedirect.com.ezproxy.lib.utexas.edu>
- Kelley, P. J. (2010). Closing the attainment gap between the U.S. and most educated countries and the contributions to be made by the states. Retrieved from <http://www.nchems.org/pubs/docs/Closing>
- Kezar, A. (2001). *Understanding and facilitating organizational change in the 21<sup>st</sup> century: Recent research and conceptualizations*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Kotter, J. P. (1996). *Leading change*. Boston, MA: Harvard Business School Press.
- Kouzes, J. M., & Posner, B. Z. (1989). *The leadership challenge: How to get extraordinary things done in organizations*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Kouzes, J.M., & Posner, B.Z. (2007). *The leadership challenge*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

- Lenz, S. (September 19, 2011). U.S. falls further behind rest of world in higher education. *Deseret News*. Retrieved from <http://www.deseretnews.com>
- Loomis, S. & Rodriguez, J. (2009). Institutional change and higher education. *Higher Education*, 58:475-489. doi: 10.1007/s10734-009-9206-0
- Lumina (2005). Achieving the Dream: Community colleges are focus of broad Initiative. Retrieved from <http://www.luminafoundation.org>
- Lumina (2008). Students aren't just data points. Lumina Foundation Lessons. (Winter). Indianapolis, IN: Davis Jenkins
- Maxwell, J.A. (2005). *Qualitative research design: an interactive approach*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- McCabe, R.H. (2000). *No one to waste: A report to public decision-makers and community college leaders*. Washington, D.C.: The Community College Press.
- McCaffery, P. (2004). *The higher education manager's handbook: Effective leadership and management in universities and colleges*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- McClenney, K.M., & McClenney, B. N. (2003). Community College Inventory: Focus on Student Persistence, Learning and Attainment. Authors.
- McClenney, K. (2004) Keeping America's promise: a report on the future of the community college. New York, NY: The Education Commission of the States.
- McClenney, K. (2009, April 14). Helping community college students succeed: A moral imperative. *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, p. A60.
- MDRC, (2011). Turning the tide: Five years of Achieving the Dream in Community Colleges. Retrieved from <http://mdrc.org>

- Miller, L.S. (1995). *An American imperative: Accelerating minority educational advancement*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Mittelstet, S.K. (2008). Richland College: Whole people, whole organization, whole lot of fun. In Roueche, J. E., Richardson, M.M., Neal, P.W., & Roueche, S.D. (Eds.), *The creative community college: Leading change through innovation* (pp. 79-94). Washington, DC: The Community College Press.
- Morest, V.S. (2009). Accountability, accreditation, and continuous improvement: Building a culture of evidence. *New Directions for Institutional Research*, 143, Fall. Retrieved from <http://www.interscience.wiley.com>
- Morest V.S. & Jenkins, D. (2007). Institutional research and the culture of evidence at community colleges. Retrieved from <http://www.achievingthedream.org>
- NCES (2009). The nation's report card: Grade 12 reading and mathematics 2009 national and pilot state results. Retrieved from <http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/pdf/main2009/2011455.pdf>
- NCES (2010). *The national assessment of educational progress (NAEP): Achievement gap*. Retrieved from <http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/studies/gaps/>
- NCSU (2011). Agriculture & Food: Field Crops. Retrieved from [ncsu.edu](http://ncsu.edu).
- Ninni, K. (2010). Building level principals as change agents in a response to intervention reform initiative (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from ProQuest. (AAT 3404166)
- O'Banion, T.O. (1997). *A learning college for the 21<sup>st</sup> century*. Westport, CT: Oryx Press.

- O'Banion, T. O. (2009). *The rogue trustee: The elephant in the room*. Phoenix, AR: League for Innovation in the Community College.
- Okpala, C.O., Hopson, L. & Okpala, A.O. (2011). The impact of current economic crisis on community colleges. *College Student Journal*, 45 (1), 214-216. Retrieved from <http://web.ebscohost.com.ezproxy.lib.utexas.edu>
- Orr, M. T & Bragg, D. D. (2001). Policy directions for K–14 education: Looking to the future. In B. Townsend and S. Twombly (eds.), *Community colleges: Policy in the future context*. Westport, CT: Ablex.
- O'Toole, J. (1996). *Leading change: The argument for values-based leadership*. New York, NY: Jossey-Bass.
- Pascarella, E.T. & Terenzini, P. (1991). *How college affects students: Findings and insights from twenty years of research*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Raemer, M.W. (2000). Sustaining educational change: A case study in restructuring pupil support services at the school level (Doctoral Dissertation). Retrieved from ProQuest. (AAT 9961594)
- Ritchie, J. & Lewis, J. (2006). *Qualitative research practice: A guide for social science students and researchers*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Roberts, C.M. (2004). *The dissertation journey: A practical and comprehensive Guide to planning, writing, and defending your dissertation*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.
- Rogers, E.M. (1995). *Diffusion of innovations* (4<sup>th</sup> ed.) New York, NY: The Free Press.

- Roueche, J. E., Baker, G. A., & Rose, R. R. (1989). *Shared vision: Transformational leadership in American community colleges*. Washington, DC: The Community College Press.
- Roueche, J.E., Milliron, M.D., & Roueche, S.D. (2003). *Practical magic*. Washington, DC: The Community College Press.
- Roueche, J.E. & Roueche, S.D. (n.d.). The art of visionary leadership: Painting a face on the future. Celebrations. Austin, TX, The University of Texas at Austin, Community College Leadership Program.
- Rudestam, K.E. & Newton, R. R. (2007). *Surviving your dissertation: A comprehensive guide to content and process*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Sabelli, N., & Dede, C. (2001). Reconceptualizing the goals and process of educational research and funding: Interconnecting scholarship and practice. Retrieved from [http://www.opencode.org/educational\\_funding.pdf](http://www.opencode.org/educational_funding.pdf)
- Saupe, J.L. (1990). The functions of institutional research. Retrieved from <http://eric.ed.gov>
- Schein, E. H. (2004). *Organizational culture and leadership*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Sherry, L. (2003). Sustainability of innovations. *Journal of Interactive Learning Research*, 13(3). Retrieved from <http://home.comcast.net/~lorraine.sherry/publications/Sherry.pdf>

- Sullivan, L. (2001). Four generations of community college leadership. *Community College Journal of Research and Practice*, 25(8), 559-571. Retrieved from <http://www.dx.doi.org/10.1080/>
- Swail, W.S. (2002). Higher education and the new demographics: Questions for policy. *Change*, 34 (4). Retrieved from <http://thenationalacademy.org/readings/instchange.pdf>
- THECB (2008). Strategic plan for Texas public community colleges: 2009-2013. Retrieved from <http://www.thecb.state.tx.us/reports/PDF/1581>
- Tichy, N. & Devana, M. (1986). *Transformational leadership*. New York, NY: Wiley & Sons.
- Tinto, V. (1993). *Rethinking the causes and cures of student attrition*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Trainer, J.F. (2004). Models and tools for strategic planning. *New Directions for Higher Education*, 123, Fall. Retrieved from <http://www3.interscience.wiley.com>
- Vera, D. & Crossan, M. (2004). Strategic leadership and organizational learning. *Academy of Management Review* 29(2), 222-240. Retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org.ezproxy.lib.utexas.edu>
- Venezia, A., Kirst M.W., & Antonio, A.L. (2003). Betraying the college dream: How disconnected k-12 and postsecondary education systems undermine student aspirations. Retrieved from [www.stanford.edu/group/bridgeproject](http://www.stanford.edu/group/bridgeproject)



- Wallin D. L. (2010). Looking to the future: Change leaders for tomorrow's community colleges. *New Directions for Community Colleges*, 149, Spring. Retrieved from <http://www.interscience.wiley.com>
- Weber, M. (1947). *The theory of social and economic organizations*. New York, NY: Free Press.
- Westera, W. (2004). On strategies of educational innovation: Between substitution and transformation. *Higher Education*, 47(4), 501-517. Retrieved from <http://www.springerlink.com.ezproxy.lib.utexas.edu/content/>
- White House (2009). The American graduation initiative. Retrieved from [http://www.whitehouse.gov/the\\_press\\_office/Excerpts-of-the-Presidents-remarks-in-Warren-Michigan-and-fact-sheet-on-the-American-Graduation-Initiative/](http://www.whitehouse.gov/the_press_office/Excerpts-of-the-Presidents-remarks-in-Warren-Michigan-and-fact-sheet-on-the-American-Graduation-Initiative/)
- Willis, J.W. (2007). *Foundations of qualitative research: Interpretive and critical approaches*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Zenger, J. H., & Folkman, J. R. (2009). *The extraordinary leader: Turning good managers into great leaders*. New York, NY: McGraw Hill.