

Achieving the Dream

Improving outcomes for all Olympic College students



Olympic College has a lot to be proud of. Twice in ten years, we were nominated for The Aspen Prize, the highest award for community colleges nationally. These nominations were based on close connections to industry and high graduation rates among apprenticeship program students. Despite this well-deserved recognition, community colleges across the nation, including high-performing colleges like OC, struggle to fulfill their missions. Here at OC, our mission is to ensure that our diverse communities of students achieve their educational goals. For the vast majority of our students (91%) their stated goal is to complete a degree or certificate. Unfortunately, not all students are earning their degrees or credentials in a timely manner, if at all; and many students unintentionally take more credits than needed to earn their degrees.

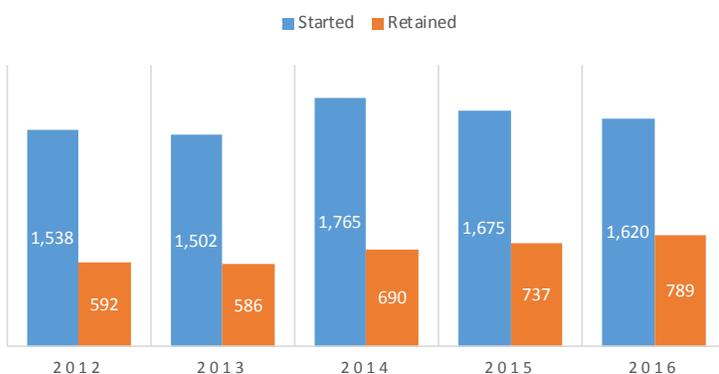
For example, at OC, 33% of full-time students graduate within three years. And only 21% of part-time students graduate within six years. For students of color, the graduation rates drops to 16% for both full- and part-time students.

Adding to the pressure are increasingly stringent federal and state financial aid requirements. Beginning next year (2018-19), the financial aid ceiling will drop from 150% of normal time to 112%, and students will be required to complete 67% (formerly 50%) of attempted credits to avoid financial aid warning and suspension status. If we are not actively monitoring and supporting our students, we will see drops in enrollment, persistence and completion.

A close look at the data as well as student voices make a strong case for change:

- Fall-to-winter retention rate (2012-2016) is 64%, which means 36% of our students disappear after one quarter.
- Fall-to-fall retention rate (2012-2016) is 41%, which means that 59% of our students disappear after one year.
- In the 2017 Survey of Entering Student Engagement (SENSE), based on our students' responses, OC ranked below the national average in key areas: 1) students have a clear academic plan and pathway, 2) students feel a strong early connection with someone at the college, and 3) students have knowledge of/use academic and social supports.
- In surveys and focus groups, students cite dissatisfaction with registration steps, advising processes, and course scheduling. Perceived misinformation, lack of access to online processes, missing/clear directions for next steps, and the absence of timely class scheduling and degree completion are frequently noted in student comments.

FALL TO FALL RETENTION



More Info

To find out more, visit Olympic.edu and search Achieving the Dream.

Contact Information

Olympic College Communications
communications@olympic.edu
360-475-7822

To address these and other emerging challenges, OC has joined **Achieving the Dream**, a comprehensive reform movement of more than 220 community colleges, each committed to helping students achieve their college and career goals. These colleges have a laser focus on equity, closing achievement gaps, and increasing graduation rates with an emphasis on low-income students, first-generation students and students of color, groups that have been traditionally underserved at all colleges.

As an **Achieving the Dream** college, we will have access to the Institutional Capacity Assessment Tool, a comprehensive framework that assesses colleges across seven essential capacities: Leadership & Vision; Data & Technology; Equity; Teaching & Learning; Engagement & Communication; Strategy & Planning; and Policies & Practices. Leadership and data coaches assigned to OC will help us improve the availability and use of data to develop programs that increase the graduation rates of all students.

Institutional Capacity Framework



The framework is designed to provide an assessment of capacities within an institution to aid in both conversation and strategic actions that may guide institutional change.

One such aspect of this work is Guided Pathways, a research-based approach that simplifies choices for students. Courses are grouped together to form clear paths through the college and into universities or careers, allowing students to complete programs without accruing unnecessary credits and student loan debt.

Achieving the Dream colleges across the country are seeing transformative results. In Texas, Odessa College more than doubled the graduation rate for their Hispanic students, and nearly doubled their graduation rate for all students. Similarly, Texarkana College, also in Texas, tripled their three-year graduation rate and increased the graduation rate for African-American students from 4% to 22%. In our own state, Pierce College improved their three-year graduation rates from 22% to 31%, and increased their retention of first generation college students by 9%.

Here at OC, we are in a strong position to see similar results because much of the groundwork is already in progress through preliminary Guided Pathways work, the Olympic College Adaptation Project (OCAP), ctLink planning, Strategic Enrollment Management (SEM), and Developmental English and math reforms.

We all want our students to succeed. **Achieving the Dream** offers an opportunity to improve outcomes for all students. To reach our full potential we must work together, engage in courageous conversations, and commit to making a difference for all we serve. With **Achieving the Dream**, there is a role for all employees of the college if you choose to participate, and we hope that you will. This is only the beginning, and we look forward to sharing more information in the coming weeks, as we work collaboratively to help our student achieve their dreams.

More Info

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