

“By emphasizing the need for data analysis and calling for broader institutional change, [Achieving the Dream has] changed the reform conversation.”—*Redesigning America’s Community Colleges: A Clearer Path to Student Success* (2015)

## Who We Are

For more than a decade, Achieving the Dream has served as a catalyst helping community colleges bolster student success. We guide colleges committed to improving student outcomes through an institutional change process designed to enable all students to earn certificates and degrees. Our longstanding emphasis on building data capacity and encouraging leadership and innovation has shaped the national conversation on student success. Our focus on access and completion for low-income students and students of color is now a focus of every community college in the nation.

Achieving the Dream is the leader of a network that includes more than 200 institutions, 100 coaches, and 15 state policy teams in 35 states and the District of Columbia and serves more than 4 million community college students. Achieving the Dream advances community college reform by:

- **Incubating new ideas** that helped colleges redefine practices based on evidence of what works;
- **Disseminating knowledge** back to the network and the field; and
- **Designing and delivering supports using a powerful capacity-building framework** that helps colleges introduce solutions at scale.

## What We Do

Achieving the Dream’s new capacity-building framework expands on ATD’s founding principles of institutional change and the network’s knowledge of what works, anchoring the next-generation of community college reform. The model encompasses seven essential institutional capacities, ranging from leadership and vision to teaching and learning, equity, and data and technology.

With the capacity framework as a guide, Achieving the Dream staff and coaches help colleges in the network create a student-focused culture that helps increase the number of students who persist and earn post-secondary credentials. Our coaches provide sustained, hands-on, customized support. Our approach integrates and aligns efforts colleges already have begun to implement to reach their strategic goals: improving developmental education, engaging faculty in student success, putting useful data and information in the hands of faculty and advisors, implementing guided pathways approaches, and going the extra mile to address students’ financial challenges to help them continue their studies.

We also offer premier peer learning events, virtual networking and professional development opportunities, access to leading national experts in the field, and the opportunity to participate in cutting edge learning initiatives.

## What We Have Learned

With the assistance of prominent researchers as partners and the generous support of our philanthropic champions, over the past decade ATD has learned critical lessons about community college improvement that is widely accepted in the field. These lessons speak to the importance of:

- **Scale.** Boutique pilot programs and interventions that are not connected to one another or scaled are not yielding strong returns.
- **Integrated, Holistic Strategy.** An institution's student success agenda is sustained by a student-focused culture and requires a holistic approach that builds and aligns institutional capacity to reinforce student success.
- **Design and Action Informed by Data.** Equity-minded interventions must be designed intentionally. Disaggregation of student outcomes and identification of the root causes of achievement gaps must be followed by systemic action to address barriers and challenges.
- **Next Generation Developmental Education.** Developmental education must be accelerated, customized to learners' needs and connected to programs of study.
- **Broader Connections.** Community colleges must connect more deeply and dynamically to other education systems, employers and community-based organizations.

## Results We Achieve

Students at ATD colleges are finding success moving through the stages of their educational journeys: learning the skills for a new career, completing courses, earning credentials and degrees, and transferring to four-year institutions. Achieving the Dream provides a framework, resources, and support to bring about the kind of holistic change that makes it possible for students to achieve their dreams.

**Bakersfield College, CA:** Increased successful completion of developmental English from 21.3 percent in 2010 to 24.9 percent in 2012 and successful completion of developmental math from 19.1 percent to 23.3 percent.

**Trident Technical College, SC:** Increased fall term successful course completion rate from 62 percent in 2011 to 76 percent in 2014.

**William H. Rainey Harper College, IL:** Increased the percentage of degree and certificate-seeking students who reached their goal within three years of initial enrollment from 14 percent in 2010 to 24 percent in 2014. The percentage of recent high school graduates who enrolled in college-level math within one year of high school graduation also increased from 47 percent to 72 percent.

**Durham Technical Community College, SC:** Increased fall-to-spring persistence from 64 percent in 2007 to 71 percent in 2011. Additionally, the persistence gap closed as African American students' persistence during the same time period rose from 62 percent to 71 percent.

**University of Hawai'i Community Colleges, HI:** Increased the number of degrees awarded by 70 percent between 2010 and 2014, during a stable enrollment period.