Our Nation’s Challenge

- For the first time in U.S. history, the current generation of college-age Americans will be less educated than their parents’ generation. Yet, our workplaces require higher-level skills than ever before. By 2018, 63% of all jobs in the U.S. are expected to require some level of postsecondary education.

- A healthy economy and democracy depend upon an educated citizenry. However, the U.S. has fallen to “average” in international education rankings: 14th for reading skills, 17th for science, and 25th for mathematics.

*The rankings are from the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) 2010 report released by the Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development (OECD)*
Wake-Up Call…

- In one single generation, America went from 1st to 12th in college completion rates for young adults.
  *2010 Progress Report from the College Board

- “This is an absolute wake-up call for America. The results are extraordinarily challenging to us and we have to deal with the brutal truth.” (U.S. Education Secretary Arne Duncan)
Community Colleges – Part of the Larger Solution

“By 2020, America will once again lead the world in producing college graduates. And I believe community colleges will play a huge part in meeting this goal, by producing an additional 5 million degrees and certificates in the next 10 years.” (President Obama)

The 1,200 community colleges nationwide serve more than 6.7 million students, representing nearly half of all undergraduates in the U.S., and enrollments have increased by 15% from 2008–2010.
Community Colleges – The Challenge Ahead

- Community colleges are a vital component in returning the U.S. to its place as a global leader in higher education degree attainment.

- However, fewer than half of all students who enter community college with the goal of earning a degree or certificate have met their goal six years later. And those numbers are much worse for low-income students and students of color. And more than just their hopes and dreams are at stake: the very foundations of our economy depend on increasing student success.
Enter Achieving the Dream…

- We need to change the community college equation, turning stories of access into stories of success.
- Achieving the Dream’s Goal: Success for more of the nation’s 6.7 million community college students, particularly students of color and low-income students.
Three Pillars

Achieving the Dream’s work is characterized by:

1. **A student-centered vision.** Helping all students—particularly low-income students and students of color—achieve their educational and career goals is of paramount importance.

2. **Equity and excellence.** Achieving the Dream is dedicated to excellent education for all students.

3. **A culture of inquiry, evidence, and accountability.** A hallmark of Achieving the Dream is our commitment to evidence-based decision-making.

Success is what counts.
Four Levers

To accomplish our goal of student success Achieving the Dream focuses on these four objectives:

1. Improving results at institutions.
2. Influencing public policy.
3. Generating knowledge.
4. Engaging the public.
Improving Results at Institutions

4 Principles
1. Committed leadership.
2. Use of evidence to improve programs & services.
3. Broad engagement.
4. Systemic institutional improvement.

5 Steps
1. Commit.
2. Use data to prioritize actions.
3. Engage stakeholders.
4. Implement, evaluate, and improve.
5. Establish a culture of continuous improvement

1 Goal: Student Success & Completion

Success is what counts.
Results – Institutional Change

- Northern Virginia Community College increased its three-year graduation rate by 4 percentage points for first-time, degree-seeking students, from 12% in the 2006-07 academic year to 16% in the 2009-10 academic year.

- The Alamo Colleges increased its success rate in developmental math from 48% in 2005 to 55% in 2009, and in developmental English from 56% in 2005 to 63% in 2009, for first time in college students district-wide.

- Northampton Community College increased its success rates in Elementary Algebra from 56% in 2006 to 63% in fall 2009.

- Valencia Community College increased its success rate in six target courses from an average success rate of 59% for the 2005 academic year to 66% for the 2010 academic year.

- Yakima Valley Community College increased its fall to winter persistence rate from 75% in 2005-06 to 81% in 2008-09.
Influencing Public Policy

Achieving the Dream is showing that once legislators and policymakers understand this dynamic, they become our partners in implementing well-informed, far-reaching policy changes.

- Currently, 16 Achieving the Dream State Policy Teams are working in deep policy change in 16 states
Results – Policy

- In 13 of the 14 states, the governor, legislature, or system head has declared increased community college student completion and success a state priority.
- 12 states have student performance measures in place or in process that are tied to strategic goals.
- 11 state data systems include, or are in the process of including, student characteristics associated with the likelihood of student success.
- 8 states have the ability to share student-level data across the K-12 and higher education sectors; 3 additional states are in the process of upgrading their systems.
- 9 states have implemented a common assessment test cut score for all institutions to use when determining student placement; 2 additional states are moving in this direction.
- 6 states have adopted financial aid policies that incentivize progression and completion.
- 8 states have a college readiness assessment that is administered in the eleventh or twelfth grade; 3 additional states are working on a similar policy.
Generating Knowledge

Achieving the Dream collects meaningful data, researches and evaluates change efforts, leads learning events, and issues publications of findings including:

- Data Notes
- Cutting Edge series
- Regular research, reporting, and analysis from Achieving the Dream institutions and policy states
- National Database
Engaging the Public

Achieving the Dream has mobilized the nation’s largest network of community college reformers dedicated to success, including leaders from:

- Higher education
- Philanthropy
- Government
- Business
- Pedagogical research community

Success is what counts.