

“Talk to Me”

ACHIEVING
THE DREAM
COMMUNITY
COLLEGES
COUNT

UPDATES FROM ACHIEVING THE DREAM COLLEGES

Fall 2007

WELCOME to *Talk to Me*, where you can learn what is happening at Achieving the Dream colleges across the country. *Talk to Me* is an internal publication that features the stories colleges tell each other — or would if they had the time — and other news to watch. This issue includes:

NEWS FROM THE COLLEGES

BREAKING NEWS

STRATEGIES TO WATCH

STUDENTS ON THE MOVE

NEWSMAKERS

RESOURCES

Tulsa Devotes In-Service Day to Achieving the Dream

On Oct. 16, **Tulsa Community College (OK)** canceled classes so all faculty and staff could attend a full day of professional development related to Achieving the Dream. This was the first time in its history that the college took such a step.



Pulitzer-nominated author Clifton Taulbert explains the importance of Achieving the Dream to Tulsa Community College employees during a collegewide staff development day.

The daylong event, held at the Tulsa Civic Center, was an opportunity to share information about the initiative and help each employee see his or her role in student success at the community college level and beyond.

“We hope to enhance the college’s capacity to make data-informed decisions to improve student learning outcomes that directly affect graduation and job attainment,” said Dr. John Kontogianes, TCC executive vice president and chief academic officer.

Focusing this day on Achieving the Dream demonstrated that the initiative is not just a grant; it’s a large-scale effort to change the way the college conducts its work. The event included a variety of speakers, table discussions and case study examples. Clifton Taulbert, a Pulitzer-nominated author and the president and founder of the Building Community Institute, closed the event with the address “Igniting the Individual Sparks of Leadership for Student Success.”

For more information, contact Cindy Lewis, media relations, clewis@tulsacc.edu, 918-595-7955. ■

NEWS FROM THE COLLEGES

Cuyahoga Adjuncts Use ABCs to Facilitate Learning

Two innovative adjunct faculty members at **Cuyahoga Community College (Cleveland, OH)** are making a difference for Achieving the Dream students. Ellen Harris, the 2006 Ohio Association of Developmental Education Teacher of the Year, engages students in a reading course paired with a general studies course that provides study skills and college success strategies. Adjunct instructor Frank Bambic teaches Math 0950, the second math course in the developmental education sequence, and pairs it with a specialized math study skills course that he also teaches. The study skills course aligns material from Skip Downing’s *On Course* curriculum with math review and practice. Tri-C is integrating *On Course* strategies into a growing number of its developmental math courses.

The two instructors’ experiences in the classroom are having an impact on affect, belonging and creativity, or the ABCs.

A — Affect. The *On Course* and general studies curricula encourage students to overcome self-doubts. Students also learn behavioral tools that they immediately can apply to the content they are learning. According to Bambic, these tools make a noticeable

NEWS FROM THE COLLEGES continues on page 2

BREAKING NEWS

December 4 Communications Phone-Ins

Reminder: The next Achieving the Dream communications phone-ins will be Dec. 4. As we did last time, we will hold two calls on the same day to better accommodate the large group of participants. The two phone calls will have the same agenda.

The times are:

Tuesday, Dec. 4, at 11 a.m. Eastern time
Tuesday, Dec. 4, at 2 p.m. Eastern time

The call-in number is 888-827-4950.
The passcode is 569615#.

The communications phone-ins are moderated by KSA-Plus Communications. For more information, contact Andrea Sussman, andrea@ksaplus.com.

For more information or to submit news about your college, contact Andrea Sussman at andrea@ksaplus.com.

NEWS FROM THE COLLEGES *from page 1*

difference. “The classroom activities and reflective journal writings have helped students develop positive self-esteem as well as better time-management and study skills,” he says. “They are learning to make better choices and think as the successful students they can all be.”

B — Belonging. The paired course dynamic creates a peer group and a support system for students. They realize they are not alone as they learn — or as they work through the daily challenges that might interrupt their education. Harris notes, “Students work cooperatively together on projects, and they spontaneously help each other with challenging in-class assignments.” The two adjunct faculty members also are making new connections through regular interactions with full-time faculty. Both have participated in college-sponsored Achieving the Dream professional development activities alongside their full-time colleagues.

C — Creativity. Tri-C’s Achieving the Dream data analysis indicated that as many as 30 percent of enrolled students were accumulating 45 or more credits without taking any college-level math courses. Further, data demonstrated that success in math was positively correlated with degree completion. Integrating the *On Course* materials into a study skills course tied to math and taught

by a qualified math instructor is an out-of-the-box approach that supports students so they can stop avoiding math and complete this significant gatekeeper course. In addition, both Bambi and Harris use dynamic teaching methods in the classroom. For example, Harris teaches her reading course in a high-tech classroom that enables her to use Internet-based programs to tailor assignments for individual students.

These innovative strategies are making a difference for participating students. Sixty-two percent of students in the math cohort (those who took the developmental math course with the study skills/*On Course* complement) earned a grade of C or better, compared with 53 percent of students who took the developmental math course without the paired study skills course. Eighty percent of students in the math cohort returned the following semester, compared with 70 percent of students who took the developmental math course without the paired course. Similarly, 67 percent of students in the reading/general education combined courses earned a grade of C or better, compared with 54 percent of reading students in unpaired courses.

For more information, contact Jennifer Spielvogel, Ph.D., vice president for institutional planning and evaluation, Jennifer.Spielvogel@tri-c.edu, 216-987-4767. ■

Pulaski Technical College Celebrates Engagement

Pulaski Technical College (*North Little Rock, AR*) is just beginning its work with Achieving the Dream and is focused on engaging the entire campus community in the effort. After returning from the Kick-Off Institute, members of the newly created Dream Team Task Force gathered for an engagement party, complete with wedding-themed decorations, to celebrate their participation in Achieving the Dream and to learn about being engaged in the planning and implementation of the initiative.

Then, Ann Fellingner and Amy Baldwin, co-directors of the initiative at Pulaski Tech, introduced Achieving the Dream to the campus community at a high-energy presentation at fall convocation. The theme for the planning year of the initiative at Pulaski

NEWS FROM THE COLLEGES *continues on page 3*

Students at Pulaski Technical College take part in a focus-group training session in mid-September for the four Arkansas Achieving the Dream colleges.



STUDENTS ON THE MOVE



Juan Ruiz
Northern Essex Community College
(Lawrence, MA)

Up until the 8th grade Juan Ruiz was doing well. He played sports and was successful in school. Shortly after that, he got off track. He gave up sports, his grades plummeted and he got into trouble with the law.

Ruiz shares his story — which includes jail time and two weeks in a hospital critical care unit recovering from gang-related injuries — because he believes it offers lessons that can help others.

He says “life is about making choices,” and at the age of 25, with four children to care for, he decided to invest in his future and enroll at Northern Essex.

His first step was to get his GED. After that, he enrolled in developmental courses at Northern Essex so he could prepare for college-level work. All that

preparation paid off because Ruiz, who is majoring in business management with plans to graduate in spring 2008, has a 3.5 grade point average. No one is more surprised than Ruiz, who says, “I never expected to be where I am now.”

Ruiz admits that his success hasn’t come easily. Balancing school with parenting and working two jobs as a cook has been stressful, and there were times when he thought about giving up. What kept him going, however, were the support services at Northern Essex, especially the staff in the Career Planning and Advising Center in Lawrence, who offered encouragement and career advice and connected him with other resources.

Ruiz has advice for others who find challenges in the way of achieving their goals. Building on his own experience, he says, “Stay motivated and use positive reinforcement, and you can overcome obstacles.” ■

NEWS FROM THE COLLEGES from page 2

Tech is “Dream Big,” and the introduction of the initiative included “dreamy” music; green tie-dyed T-shirts for everyone; and a visit by Pulaski Tech’s own Dream Girls (college President Dan Bakke and deans Augusta Farver and Joey Cole), who dressed in Supremes-style gowns and feather boas.

The Dream Team Task Force began its work immediately after convocation and has been making steady progress ever since. The co-directors created a master calendar for the year, and the communications officer created a communications plan for the initiative. The task force is subdivided into two groups, the core team and the data team, and each has created a progress matrix for this academic year. All information about the initiative can be found on the college’s Web site: www.pulaskitech.edu.

In September, Pulaski Tech hosted a focus group training session for selected individuals

from other Arkansas Achieving the Dream colleges. Dr. Ken Gonzalez, an Achieving the Dream data facilitator from the University of San Diego, guided participants through an extensive two-day schedule, which included a chance for each participant to lead a focus group composed of Pulaski Tech students.

Pulaski Tech will share data generated during these sessions with the data team, which will, in turn, share the information with appropriate members of the campus community.

Pulaski Tech also participated in state-wide policy discussions and planning programs hosted by the Arkansas Department of Higher Education as part of the Achieving the Dream initiative.

For more information, contact Carol Langston, vice president for college advancement, clangston@pulaskitech.edu, 501-812-2211. ■

Former U.S. Secretary of Education Lauro Cavazos (left) and University of Houston-Downtown President Max Castillo

Lauro Cavazos Addresses University of Houston-Downtown

The University of Houston-Downtown (TX) kicked off its Achieving the Dream initiative for this academic year with a two-day campus event that featured keynote speaker Lauro Cavazos, former U.S. Secretary of Education.

Cavazos, a past president of Texas Tech University, met with UHD students, faculty and staff to discuss Achieving the Dream and commended UHD for being an institution “totally committed to the community.”

NEWS FROM THE COLLEGES continues on page 4



STRATEGIES TO WATCH

Patrick Henry Works To Increase Retention — and Taps Durham Tech for Ideas

Patrick Henry Community College (Martinsville, VA) has introduced a new approach to early warning and a new mentoring program to increase retention.

Early warning techniques have been on the PHCC campus for years, but as a result of its Achieving the Dream work, the college has developed and implemented a new approach. PHCC changed an existing position to create a retention specialist whose major focus is identifying students who are not attending classes. The retention specialist is part of Student Development Services and is responsible for contacting any student who misses two consecutive meetings of any class.

The college also has started to use the PeopleSoft Attendance Tracker System. All faculty members record attendance in the system using the Web-accessible computers located in every classroom. Any time a class meets and attendance is not taken, the system automatically sends a reminder to the faculty member and copies the appropriate dean.

Every day, the retention specialist accesses a database showing attendance and then contacts students who have missed two classes. The retention specialist first telephones each student and then follows up with an e-mail and a letter. In communicating with students, the specialist explains the value the college places

on attendance and provides detailed information about available support services.

PHCC also has revised its mentoring program, which was first implemented in fall 2005. At that time, data showed a slight improvement in retention of the high-risk students who received mentoring, but PHCC wanted to do more.

To identify next steps, the developmental studies faculty visited another Achieving the Dream college, Durham Technical Community College (NC), which was having success with its mentoring program. After visiting Durham Tech, PHCC overhauled its mentoring program. Students now are selected for mentoring because they are considered high risk (enrolled in at least two developmental courses), and they are sent an invitation to participate in the program. Training was extended from two weeks to five weeks, and mentors now put greater emphasis on students’ learning styles as well as learning and study strategies.

Mentors and students are required to meet for two hours per month. They can meet weekly or biweekly or attend on- or off-campus events together. In addition, students are required to participate in at least five skills-based workshops or seminars each school year. These activities address a range of issues, from study skills to debt consolidation. PHCC also offers incentives to students, including door prizes at group activities and a \$75 stipend to each student who meets the program’s requirements.

For more information, contact Kris Landrum, public relations director, klandrum@ph.vccs.edu, 276-656-0259. ■

NEWS FROM THE COLLEGES from page 3

Cavazos also outlined best practices that he believes will help reduce the education deficit in the United States. These practices included raising campus and community awareness of the needs of minority and economically disadvantaged students, making parents aware of the cost of a college education when their children are young, promoting greater faculty diversity, and partnering with the community to ensure students come to college prepared for higher education.

“One person caring about a child is all it takes to make that child a success,”

he said after giving students information about his own background and educational experiences.

The two-day kickoff event also included workshops analyzing English, history and math courses that traditionally have challenged students’ academic progression. Participants shared active learning strategies and discussed ways to better prepare students for college-level work.

For more information, contact Susan Davis, executive director of public affairs, daviss@uhd.edu, 713-221-8636. ■

Community College of Philadelphia Looks to Faculty Development

As **Community College of Philadelphia (PA)** enters its first year of implementing Achieving the Dream strategies, the college is focused on using faculty professional development to improve student outcomes.

Toward this end, the college welcomed faculty back from the summer during Professional Development Week, from Aug. 27 through Aug. 31, with the theme of Achieving the Dream.

“After a year of planning, we now enter a four-year period of implementation designed to produce systemic change in support of tangible student outcomes,” Stephen M. Curtis, Ph.D., the president of Community College of Philadelphia, told participants. “Achieving the Dream is becoming the context for our most intensive activity around student success and student success indicators.”

NEWS FROM THE COLLEGES continues on page 5

Community College of Philadelphia President Stephen M. Curtis addresses faculty at the opening of Professional Development Week. (Photo by Dennis Gingell, Community College of Philadelphia)



STUDENTS ON THE MOVE

Jodie Baker

Jackson Community College (MI)

When Jodie Baker decided it was time to work toward finding a better career to support herself and her son, she chose Jackson Community College.

“I was looking for a better future,” Baker says.

Baker has worked as a direct care worker with Christ-Centered Homes. She enrolled at JCC in 2004 and is working toward an associate degree in criminal justice. Her mother worked as a corrections officer, and Baker had friends who were youth specialists, so she is working toward a career involving the law and young people — perhaps in probation.

Returning to college after working and having a child took some adjusting. Baker is not alone, however, as locally and across the country, more and more adults age 25 and older are enrolling in college.

“That first semester was hard, but once I got used to the campus and staff and learned how to motivate myself to complete my homework, everything was fine,” Baker recalls. “I knew that I

would need to provide for my son, and I would need to build a foundation on my own to do that. That’s why I’m here.”

Baker’s 9-year-old son, Ja’Shawn Riley, continues to motivate her to achieve. “He’s so proud of me. We both motivate each other.”

Her classes have gone well, and she has had the opportunity to work one semester as a student security intern on campus. “That was a life-changing experience for me,” she says. “I learned that, in this field, I need to stay alert and focused at all times, to always be aware of my surroundings. It also helped me to work as part of a team.”

While going back to college is never easy, she has found the faculty and staff at JCC to be encouraging and helpful.

“Sometimes it is hard to juggle everything, but I know there is a light at the end of the road, so I can keep on going,” Baker says. “There is so much to learn.” ■



NEWS FROM THE COLLEGES *from page 4*

The week’s activities were developed by a team of faculty, administrators and staff who used feedback from surveys about professional development to create interactive workshops that reflected the college’s interests and needs. Through the surveys, they discovered that there is a strong desire for real conversations about teaching and learning, improving student outcomes, and enhancing the experiences of all members of the college community.

A Promising Practices workshop, for example, focused on the particular needs of underprepared students who begin their postsecondary classes in developmental English and math. During the session, the presenters demonstrated classroom practices that can help underprepared students persist in their educational goals.

Other Promising Practices workshops included: College-Wide Collaboration = 3D Success; Universal Design; Latest Developments in Distance Education; and Reading Across the Disciplines. Information from the Promising Practices workshops will be used to initiate a new online journal for internal use by faculty and staff.

Professional Development Week also included think tank sessions designed to generate collegewide discussion on specific issues relating to student learning and success. One such session was called “Strategies for Student Engagement in the Gatekeeper Courses.” The college has found that pass rates for six key gatekeeper courses, including math, English, biology and computer information systems, should be improved. During this think tank session, faculty, administrators and staff had an in-depth discussion about promising strategies to promote improved teaching and learning in these critical courses.

Curtis put the entire week’s activities in context when he said, “In a city in which one-quarter of our population lives in poverty, an associate’s degree from Community College of Philadelphia represents a path to family-sustaining wages ... a path to a brighter and safer future ... and a sound investment for our city and region.”

For more information, contact Anthony Twyman, media relations director, atwyman@ccp.edu, 215-751-8082. For information about creating an online journal for your college, contact Judith Gay, vice president for academic affairs, jgay@ccp.edu, 215-751-8350. ■

South Texas Summit Focuses on Critical Thinking and College Readiness

More than 200 people participated in the second annual Summit on Career and College Readiness hosted by **South Texas College (McAllen)** in March.

“We are responsible for the workforce of tomorrow, and that is no small responsibility,” said Dr. Shirley A. Reed, president of South Texas College, kicking off the summit.

Nationally, 80 to 90 percent of entering high school freshmen say they want to go to college once they finish high school. Yet according to the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, only 45 percent of Texas high school seniors are entering college right after earning a high school diploma. So what happens between freshmen year and graduation? The summit provided an opportunity for colleges and K-12 leaders to discuss this question and explore ways to help more students better prepare for college.

Some presenters and participants noted that in certain areas of Texas, notably Hidalgo and Starr counties, 52 percent of students are

NEWS FROM THE COLLEGES *continues on page 6*

STRATEGIES TO WATCH

Coastal Bend Focuses on Student and Faculty Voices

Coastal Bend College (Beeville, TX) has learned a great deal from student and faculty focus groups moderated by Achieving the Dream national partner Public Agenda.

Maria Martha Chavez, senior public engagement research associate for Public Agenda, moderated the CBC focus groups and noted that many issues that commonly occur in community colleges can be resolved when instructors and students come to the table to talk.

“The more students have contact with faculty members, the more likely students are to succeed,” she explains. That is the root of Public Agenda’s work with CBC.

In a forum of students and instructors, Chavez asked about obstacles at CBC. She wanted to gauge students’ descriptions of the challenges they face and faculty members’ views of issues that hinder students’ ability to complete their programs.

Many CBC students expressed concerns about communication with faculty members. Some found it difficult to ask for help.

They lacked the confidence to speak up for themselves or found instructors intimidating. Others felt that faculty members were either unavailable or indifferent. Students also mentioned personal issues relating to finances and family.

Instructors were concerned that students’ performance often is affected by personal issues and classroom distractions. They said that students were not given enough advice on placement and found that some students were ill-prepared for college. They also saw rapidly changing technology and limited resources as deterrents to student success.

Many instructors voiced concerns about the lack of change in the structure of colleges like CBC that are now made up mostly of nontraditional students.

Chavez explained that perceptions, right or wrong, heavily affect student success in college. She said these focus groups and subsequent online and face-to-face meetings would continue to define the framework of Public Agenda’s work with CBC.

For more information, contact Susan Smedley, director of institutional advancement, smedleys@coastalbend.edu, 361-354-2399. ■

NEWS FROM THE COLLEGES *from page 5*

pursuing higher education immediately after high school — a figure that is 7 percentage points higher than the state average. One reason for this improvement may be a focus on college readiness in those areas.

“I faced economic challenges that made college a struggle and let me tell you that yes, we need positive reinforcement,” said Sergio Silva, a native of Roma, TX, and an STC scholar. “Instead of telling a student ‘you aren’t college-ready,’ tell them ‘this is what you need to do to be college-ready.’”

Silva’s comment drew rousing applause from the audience. Roma is located in Starr County.

Several themes were reinforced throughout the course of the event. Presenters urged all grade levels to work together and communicate their problems to find best practices and implement universal standards for education. Another idea expressed by multiple present-

ers was the need to increase academic rigor in classrooms in order to challenge students and set higher expectations.

“We have to set the bar higher for our students,” said Laurie Bricker, member of the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board. “We should expect more from them so that they learn to expect more from themselves.”

The biggest challenge came from Dr. Ray Marshall, renowned expert on educational trends and workforce issues who formerly served as the Secretary of Labor under President Jimmy Carter and currently serves as the chair of the Board of Trustees for the National Center on Education and the Economy (NCEE).

He laid out an aggressive plan for revamping educational infrastructures and attitudes to prepare students for a knowledge-driven society. The plan is outlined in a report from

NCEE’s New Commission on the Skills of the American Workforce. Recommendations from the report, *Tough Choices or Tough Times*, include:

- tracking students from grade school through college and all the way into the workforce;
- implementing a universal curriculum;
- increasing teacher pay and providing a clear career ladder for teachers;
- recruiting teachers from the top one-third of college graduates;
- providing students with personal competitiveness accounts funded by the government; and
- eliminating multiple choice standardized tests in favor of critical thinking tests that force students to learn key skills rather than memorizing facts.

For more information, contact Helen Escobar, coordinator of public relations, hjescoba@southtexascollege.edu, 956-872-8359. ■

NEWS FROM THE COLLEGES *continues on page 7*



Laurie Bricker, member of the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board; Dr. Martha G. Romero, Achieving the Dream coach; Dr. Blandina Cardenas, president of The University of Texas–Pan American; Dr. Shirley A. Reed; and Dr. Ray Marshall, chair of the Board of Trustees for the National Center on Education and the Economy and former Secretary of Labor, were speakers at South Texas College’s second annual Summit on College and Career Readiness.

STUDENTS ON THE MOVE

Carole Vickerman

Hillsborough Community College (Tampa, FL)

Carole Vickerman is a first-generation college student as well as a 55-year-old single mother of three adult children. The New Zealand native arrived at HCC needing developmental reading, although her writing skill placed her into college-level English. Today she attends Hillsborough’s Honors Institute and expects to graduate in fall 2008.

Vickerman attributes her belief in herself with meeting Jean Sieffert, her reading instructor. She views Sieffert as an inspirational mentor and coach.

“She encouraged me to submit my application for the Honors Institute and also to become a supplemental instructor,” Vickerman says.

Vickerman knew that starting college after age 50 would not be easy. She draws strength from her two daughters, both of whom

live in the United States. (Her son lives in New Zealand.) This courageous trio supports one another both financially and emotionally. Her older daughter is a doctoral student at the University of South Florida, and her younger daughter is a fellow student at HCC.

“I always wanted to go to school, but I was a single parent to three young children, and I had few resources to care for them,” Vickerman says. “Today, I am proud to have the opportunity to join them as they live out their dreams.”

After graduation from HCC, Carole plans to transfer to the University of South Florida to pursue a bachelor’s degree in elementary education. ■



NEWS FROM THE COLLEGES from page 6

Lee College Asks, “Where Have All the Cowboys Gone?”

In October, **Lee College** (*Baytown, TX*) hosted a town hall meeting that addressed the growing gender gap in education and its socioeconomic impact. In 1947, 71 percent of college students were men, thanks in large measure to the GI Bill. Since then, male enrollment in college has declined steadily, and today, 43 percent of college students are male.

More than 100 people, including students, faculty, community leaders and superintendents, attended the town hall meeting, named “Where Have All the Cowboys Gone?”

Participants discussed strategies to bring more men to college. Existing strategies include dual enrollment and Lee’s partnership with Liberty County, through which Lee faculty members visit area high schools to train students for technical careers.

Participants also discussed new strategies, such as the Rise to Leadership speaker series, started by Jeremy Jones, Lee’s director of Achieving the Dream. This series brings prominent male business, political and sports figures to Lee, where they speak to audiences of primarily male high school and college students. Lee also is changing its advertising to feature successful male graduates and is holding focus groups with men on campus.

In February 2008, Lee will host a second town hall meeting about the growing gender gap in higher education.

For more information, contact Jacqueline Whitaker, public information manager, jwhitake@lee.edu, 281-425-6338. ■

Community College of Allegheny County Builds on Connections

Achieving the Dream work inspires participants to make connections — with other people and with ideas. Mary Kate Quinlan, learning assessment analyst for **Community College of Allegheny County** (*Pittsburgh, PA*) points out that many of the college’s efforts are inter-related. One example of this synergy is the college’s work with Achieving the Dream and the Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE).*

The college’s Achieving the Dream work focuses on providing extra support for at-risk students to help them successfully complete developmental courses and progress to credit-bearing courses. The CCSSE survey identifies opportunities for improving levels of student engagement, especially in the classroom, and research shows that student engagement can serve as a proxy for student success.

These efforts, performed individually, are worth undertaking. Together, they form a powerful commitment to data-driven decisionmaking with a sole purpose: to help more community college students succeed.

CCAC participated in CCSSE in spring 2007 to collect baseline data for its Achieving the Dream efforts. The college will administer CCSSE again in 2009 and 2011 to measure the improvement in student engagement. By participating in assessment, faculty members define clear expectations for student learning and measure students’ abilities to meet those expectations.

Many upcoming campus presentations are planned to delve into CCAC’s CCSSE results and spark discussions for improving the educational experience. The college’s Achieving the Dream committees are meeting

regularly. In a recent session, team members identified policy areas for review and possible revision, such as course deregistration because of nonpayment of tuition, medical withdrawal and placement testing. Specific to placement testing, the team will look at questions including:

- How do local scores used at CCAC compare with national ones?
- What would be the impact on enrollment if national scores were used?
- Should there be a bottom score on the placement test — i.e., is there a score below which students cannot be successful in even the lowest level developmental course?
- How seriously do the students take the placement test?
- Should the diagnostic portion of the Compass test be administered?

For more information, contact Helen Kaiser, director of public relations, hkaiser@ccac.edu, 412-237-4670. ■

*CCSSE is part of the Community College Leadership Program at the University of Texas–Austin, which is a national partner in Achieving the Dream.

NEWS FROM THE COLLEGES continues on page 8

NEWSMAKERS

The news media continue to take note of Achieving the Dream and its participating colleges.

The Chronicle of Higher Education’s annual Community College supplement issue, published the week of Oct. 26, included a story on developmental education at community colleges. The piece highlighted the efforts of **Montgomery County Community College** (*Blue Bell, PA*), including the college’s participation in Achieving the Dream. *Chronicle* subscribers can access the story online at <http://chronicle.com/weekly/v54/i09/09b00501.htm>.

In its Aug. 27 issue, *Community College Week* ran a cover story, “Dream Achievers,” that presented a look at the state of Achieving the Dream and its ambitious agenda to promote institutional change that will help students succeed. Download a PDF of the article at www.ccweek.com/news/articlefiles/85-CCW082707-Pg1-22.pdf.

Over the summer, *The Boston Globe* ran an editorial titled “Laboratories of Achievement,” praising Achieving the Dream and noting the addition of the four participating Massachusetts colleges. The editorial is available at www.boston.com/news/globe/editorial_opinion/editorials/articles/2007/07/01/laboratories_of_achievement/.

In addition, several Achieving the Dream colleges are in the process of customizing and pitching versions of the sample op-ed piece that was sent to all participating colleges in September. For more information, please contact Zac Brousseau, KSA-Plus Communications, zac@ksaplus.com, 703-528-7100, ext. 102. More Achieving the Dream media coverage can be found at www.achievingthedream.org/NEWSROOM/clips.tp. ■

NEWS FROM THE COLLEGES *from page 7*

Technical College of the Lowcountry Includes Faculty and Staff with “COPS”

More than 70 employees of **Technical College of the Lowcountry** (*Beaufort, SC*) participated in the college’s campuswide kickoff for Achieving the Dream, held in August.

The kickoff began with an introduction of the initiative through a multimedia presentation by TCL President Dr. Anne S. McNutt.

“What excites me most about Achieving the Dream is that this initiative gives TCL a vehicle to focus on student achievement and to improve student success,” she says.

After the presentation, participants divided into small groups and used a “COPS” process — Concerns, Opportunities, Problems and Strengths — to identify and rank key issues.

“This activity was a particularly important part of our college’s kickoff because it allowed faculty and staff to learn about Achieving the Dream and what to expect over the coming years — and also to engage in

early dialogue around the many aspects of the initiative,” recalls Matteel King, TCL’s vice president for student affairs and Achieving the Dream core team leader.

Nine groups generated 82 concerns, 87 opportunities, 63 problems and 59 strengths. These items included concerns about having adequate time and resources, excitement regarding the opportunity to improve student retention, and potential problems with accurate data collection. Participants also identified the college’s dedicated faculty and staff as its biggest strength.

Faculty and staff said they valued the opportunity to interact with one another while learning more about the initiative. “The faculty and staff interaction in our groups was the best part of everything,” notes history instructor Greg Mauriocrat.

Dr. Rose Kearney-Nunnery, who at the time was TCL interim vice president for academic affairs, served as a small-group facilitator. “I just liked the broader involvement and inclusion of the college community in the process,” she says.

The COPS activity successfully allowed the college to gather valuable feedback. “The in-depth involvement by faculty and staff helped us learn how the initiative was being perceived by the campus community. And that helped us candidly address questions and concerns,” King says. “This open approach is a big part of the Achieving the Dream initiative, and being able to model that so early has hopefully set the tone for this work on our campus.”

For more information, contact Matteel King, vice president for student affairs, mking@tcl.edu, 843-525-8215. ■

Nancy Weber facilitates a small group discussion during the “COPS” activity.



RESOURCES

Is your college one of the many Achieving the Dream institutions working to improve developmental math delivery and results?

When colleges try alternative delivery and design approaches for remedial math, the institutions are guided — and sometimes limited — by system and state policies related to enrollment, financial aid, funding, data systems and accountability. These policies often reinforce the traditional design and delivery of developmental education and make flexible delivery difficult.

A new Achieving the Dream policy brief — *Accelerating Remedial Math Education: How Institutional Innovation and State Policy Interact* — looks at these issues as it reviews the efforts of three community colleges to revamp their remedial math programming.

Two of the three colleges are Achieving the Dream institutions.

The efforts of these three colleges provide an important and instructive window on how institutional practice can be shaped by state and system policies — and by shifts in policies. They also demonstrate how important it is for college innovators to work closely with state and system policymakers to protect and promote efforts that show promise to improve student success at the college level. Get the full brief at www.achievingthedream.org/publicpolicy/policybriefspubs/default.tp.

Have you read the latest issue of Data Notes?

This bimonthly publication shares findings from Achieving the Dream researchers and makes suggestions for data analysis

at the community college level. Get the latest issue at www.achievingthedream.org/dataresearch/datanotesnewsletter/default.tp. Also at www.achievingthedream.org, you will find profiles of participating colleges, strategies, data and research from partners, and student success stories.

Coming at the Strategy Institute (Feb. 5–8 in Atlanta):

Sessions and resources to help colleges address Structural Inequity — the interplay of influences and practices that, often unintentionally, lead to unfair advantages for certain groups of people. Upcoming resources will include a PowerPoint presentation and a briefing paper. Visit www.achievingthedream.org to register for the Strategy Institute.