

## The Challenge

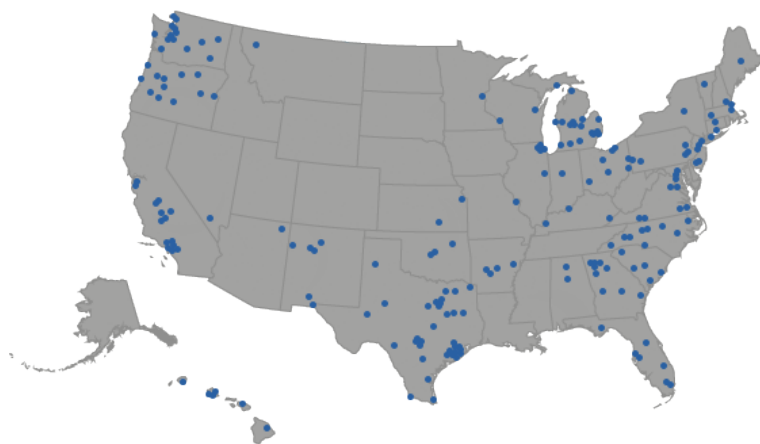
Community colleges find themselves in the center of a demanding environment. In fewer than ten years, **65%** of all jobs in the American economy will require postsecondary education and training beyond high school.<sup>1</sup> Wealth and income inequality have grown significantly, leaving a diminished middle class more reliant on community colleges to provide affordable preparation for jobs with family-sustaining wages.

Yet the value of higher education has come under scrutiny, and the pressure to improve student

outcomes has intensified, especially at community colleges where only **40%** of students who began their studies in 2007 had completed a degree or certificate by 2013.<sup>2</sup> Community colleges are committed to meeting these challenges and realizing their potential as institutions that can help the nation create a competitive workforce for the global economy, offer more opportunities for students to earn college credentials, and support a more economically and socially equitable society. With so much at stake, the success of their work is both a moral and economic imperative.

## Achieving the Dream

Achieving the Dream is a national organization dedicated to community college student access and success. Over 10 years, Achieving the Dream has built a network of more than **200** community colleges committed to helping more students, especially low-income students and students of color, complete certificates, earn associates degrees, or transfer to four-year institutions. Achieving the Dream guides and supports the colleges through coaching, peer learning opportunities, and adoption of effective practices and policies.



Achieving the Dream has completed a multi-year strategic plan with five priority areas and created new vision and mission statements. The plan builds on recognized strengths and defines new directions. Informed by a decade of experience, the priorities will direct Achieving the Dream and its Network community colleges toward solutions to the challenges that define this era in higher education. Engaging partners and investors will remain a hallmark of Achieving the Dream's approach to defining and advancing the community college reform agenda and improving performance and accountability.

With over **200** institutions, more than **100** coaches and advisors, and **15** state policy teams - working throughout **34** states and the District of Columbia - the Achieving the Dream National Reform Network serves **3.8 million** community college students.

## Vision

A nation in which community colleges are highly valued for preserving access and assuring that their students, especially low income students and students of color, achieve their goals for academic success, personal growth, and economic opportunity.

## Mission

To lead and support a national network of community colleges to achieve sustainable institutional transformation through sharing knowledge, innovative solutions and effective practices and policies leading to improved outcomes for all students.

<sup>1</sup>Recovery: Job Growth and Education Requirements Through 2020, Anthony P. Carnevale, Nicole Smith, Jeff Strohl, Center for Education and the Workforce, 2013

<sup>2</sup>Completing College: A National View of Student Attainment Rates – Fall 2007 Cohort, National Student Clearinghouse Research Center, 2013

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## Five Part Strategy

Achieving the Dream's strategic approach will strengthen its position as a national leader by guiding, supporting and inspiring Network community colleges to reaffirm their commitment to access while striving for greater student achievement. New focus areas and enhanced services, informed by ten years of experience, will maximize learning and change for community colleges in the network. Priorities include:

- Leading colleges through a process of institutional change that supports prompt adoption of effective practices, prioritizes change management, and nurtures innovations aimed at closing achievement gaps while substantially increasing the attainment of credentials.
- Assisting colleges in improving pedagogy and restructuring curriculum across the student experience to increase student outcomes significantly.
- Raising Network community colleges' awareness of the power of data to inform institutional change and decision-making, and deepen their ability to collect, analyze, and present data on essential student outcomes as well as institutional change processes.
- Facilitating the development of strategic partnerships among Network colleges, corporations, and community organizations to leverage resources that will increase student outcomes, strengthen regional economies, and improve civic life.
- Influencing practice and policy through active dissemination of knowledge and thought leadership.

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## New Areas of Emphasis

- A model of institutional change that encourages colleges to take on new challenges as soon as they have achieved designated milestones rather than advancing by the calendar.
- Coaching for college leaders that addresses change management and introduces successful leadership practices from disciplines beyond higher education.
- Opportunities for advanced colleges to collaborate in identifying next-generation challenges and exploring solutions.
- Immediate, sustained attention to engaging faculty in improving instruction and redesigning curriculum across the student experience.
- Student outcome measures aligned with changes in states' higher education data reporting requirements.
- A stronger national voice on behalf of community colleges in state and national higher education conversations.
- Services, resources, and partnerships focused on aligning and integrating Network colleges academic and workforce efforts.

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## Improvements that Build on Strengths

- Increased quantity and quality of resources documenting successful practices and policies.
- Broader dissemination of knowledge.
- More integrated, consistent and customized leadership and data coaching that improve colleges' performance.
- Sophisticated diagnostic and other tools that will allow colleges to quickly understand strengths and weaknesses.