

# **Achieving the Dream: Community Colleges Count**

J. David Armstrong  
Chancellor

Division of Community Colleges and Workforce Education  
State Board of Education  
April 19, 2005

# What is Achieving the Dream?

- National initiative that aims to enhance the success of community college students, particularly the underserved population
- Purpose is to enhance opportunity for the growing number of students for whom community colleges are the point of entry into higher education

# Who is Participating?

- Community colleges were asked to submit an application to the Lumina Foundation in 2004.
- Community colleges had to make a commitment to:
  - Improve the success of underserved students on their campuses
  - Use data to guide their decisions
  - Share lessons they learn so that students in other institutions and states can benefit.

# Who is Participating?

- 5 states are participating in the study:
  - Florida
  - New Mexico
  - North Carolina
  - Texas
  - Virginia

# Who is Participating?

- 27 community colleges in these 5 states were chosen. Florida has 4 community colleges:
  - Broward Community College
  - Hillsborough Community College
  - Tallahassee Community College
  - Valencia Community College

# What is the Expected Outcome?

- Participating colleges have pledged to maintain students' access while working to increase the percentage of them who:
  - Complete remedial courses and move on to credit-bearing courses.
  - Enroll in and complete “gatekeeper” courses such as introductory math and English.
  - Complete the courses they take, earning a grade of C or higher.
  - Re-enroll from one semester to the next.
  - Earn certificates and/or degrees.

# Why Does it Matter?

- Providing open access to higher education has always been a vital role of community colleges.
- Unfortunately, access does not always lead to success.
- Studies show that completion rates are significantly lower for minority students.

# 8<sup>th</sup> Grade Study

## Low-Income Students

*n=86,711*



In Florida, for every 100 low-income 8th grade students



... 51 students graduate from high school.



... 29 enroll in the Florida Community College System.



...6 enroll in the State University System

## Non-Low-Income Students

*n=112,999*



In Florida, for every 100 non-low income 8th grade



... 66 students graduate from high school.



... 35 enroll in the Florida Community College System.



... 19 enroll in the State University System.

 = 10 Students

# Why Does it Matter?

- In 2003-04, the Florida Community College System (FCCS) served 82% of all minority students enrolled in either public university lower division classes or the FCCS.
- In 2003-04, the FCCS had 81% of all Pell Grant awards for students enrolled in either the SUS or the FCCS.

# Potential for Success

- The FCCS is already providing a pathway to success for low-income and minority students. We want to do a better job.
  - Despite barriers to enrollment, retention, and success for minority students, since 1998 the number of completers in programs that lead to an associate degree or certificate in the FCCS has increased by 27 percent for African-American students and 11 percent for Hispanic students.

# Potential for Success

- The success of the FCCS is already recognized by the citizens of the state.
- A survey done for Jobs for the Future indicates
  - Eight in ten Floridians (81%) place a high priority on community colleges as a way to complete the first two years of a Bachelor's degree close to home.
  - Three in four Floridians (75%) similarly value community colleges as a place to start college for those who cannot afford the cost of a four-year degree.
  - The same majority (75%) places a high priority on the availability of community colleges as a source of job training for people who want to enter a trade or career not requiring a four-year degree.

# Work Done So Far

- State Level
  - Have begun a policy audit
  - Collected data on student success
  - Produced five years longitudinal tracking charts
- College Level
  - Designated core teams
  - Held internal workshops on data and strategies
  - Engaged cross-sectional teams in proposal development

# Findings to Date

- High school preparation is an extremely important factor in postsecondary success.
- Course completions rates were different for different groups at the different AtD institutions. This same information was then calculated for all 28 FCCS institutions and shared at CIA/CSA meetings to allow for cross-institutional discussions of “best practices.”
- We are beginning our analysis of the data contained in the statewide administration of the Community College Survey of Student Engagement done in April 2004.

# Next Steps

- The four institutions involved are working with Lumina funded coaches to create four-year plans to address different aspects of access and success.
- These plans will focus on various components of an academic career such as College Preparatory coursework, moving through college level courses to graduation, etc.

# Next Steps

- In May 2005, each community college will submit a final proposal on how it will increase access and success for underserved populations.
- The Achieving the Dream partners will then select the final community colleges to participate in four years of implementation.
- The selected proposals will be shared at a statewide AtD meeting in mid-May.

# The Future

- The four AtD institutions will be developing a process that will provide a “culture of evidence” to use as a basis for future strategies.
- That process as well as lessons learned and successful strategies will be shared with the other 24 institutions within the FCCS.
- The eventual outcome is that minority and low-income students will be better served by the entire FCCS as a result of our participation in this initiative.