

New Directions for  
Community Colleges



# Institutional Effectiveness

Ronald B. Head  
EDITOR

Number 153 • Spring 2011

Discover this journal online at

 **WILEY**  **ONLINE LIBRARY**  
wileyonlinelibrary.com

**New Directions for  
Community Colleges**

Arthur M. Cohen  
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Richard L. Wagoner  
ASSOCIATE EDITOR

Gabriel Jones  
MANAGING EDITOR

---

# Institutional Effectiveness

Ronald B. Head  
EDITOR

Number 153 • Spring 2011  
Jossey-Bass  
San Francisco

---

INSTITUTIONAL EFFECTIVENESS

Ronald B. Head (ed.)

New Directions for Community Colleges, no. 153

Arthur M. Cohen, Editor-in-Chief

Richard L. Wagoner, Associate Editor

Gabriel Jones, Managing Editor

Copyright © 2011 Wiley Periodicals, Inc., A Wiley Company. All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, scanning, or otherwise, except as permitted under Section 107 or 108 of the 1976 United States Copyright Act, without either the prior written permission of the Publisher or authorization through payment of the appropriate per-copy fee to the Copyright Clearance Center, 222 Rosewood Drive, Danvers, MA 01923; (978) 750-8400; fax (978) 646-8600. Requests to the Publisher for permission should be addressed to the Permissions Department, c/o John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 111 River St., Hoboken, NJ 07030; (201) 748-8789, fax (201) 748-6326, [www.wiley.com/go/permissions](http://www.wiley.com/go/permissions).

NEW DIRECTIONS FOR COMMUNITY COLLEGES (ISSN 0194-3081, electronic ISSN 1536-0733) is part of The Jossey-Bass Higher and Adult Education Series and is published quarterly by Wiley Subscription Services, Inc., A Wiley Company, at Jossey-Bass, 989 Market Street, San Francisco, CA 94103-1741. Periodicals Postage Paid at San Francisco, California, and at additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to New Directions for Community Colleges, Jossey-Bass, 989 Market Street, San Francisco, CA 94103-1741.

SUBSCRIPTIONS cost \$89.00 for individuals and \$259.00 for institutions, agencies, and libraries in the United States. Prices subject to change.

EDITORIAL CORRESPONDENCE should be sent to the Editor-in-Chief, Arthur M. Cohen, at the Graduate School of Education and Information Studies, University of California, Box 951521, Los Angeles, CA 90095-1521. All manuscripts receive anonymous reviews by external referees.

*New Directions for Community Colleges* is indexed in CIJE: Current Index to Journals in Education (ERIC), Contents Pages in Education (T&F), Current Abstracts (EBSCO), Ed/Net (Simpson Communications), Education Index/Abstracts (H. W. Wilson), Educational Research Abstracts Online (T&F), ERIC Database (Education Resources Information Center), and Resources in Education (ERIC).

Microfilm copies of issues and articles are available in 16mm and 35mm, as well as microfiche in 105mm, through University Microfilms Inc., 300 North Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, MI 48106-1346.

# CONTENTS

EDITORS' NOTES	1
<i>Ronald B. Head</i>	
1. The Evolution of Institutional Effectiveness in the Community College	5
<i>Ronald B. Head</i>	
This chapter presents a brief, historical evolution of institutional effectiveness in community colleges, analyzes various components of institutional effectiveness, and provides a practical, operational definition of the institutional effectiveness.	
2. Institutional Effectiveness as Process and Practice in the American Community College	13
<i>Terri Mulkins Manning</i>	
Institutional effectiveness is defined within the context of regional accreditation, common terms related to institutional effectiveness are presented, and processes used in the practice of community college institutional effectiveness are explored.	
3. Accountability and Institutional Effectiveness in the Community College	23
<i>Peter T. Ewell</i>	
As a result of heightened goals for degree attainment, community colleges presently find themselves in the national spotlight and under increasing scrutiny with regard to accountability. This challenge can be met using technology and a new generation of accountability measures appropriate to the distinctive community college mission.	
4. Accreditation and Its Influence on Institutional Effectiveness	37
<i>Ronald B. Head, Michael S. Johnson</i>	
Accreditation provides structure and standards which allow community colleges to improve the effectiveness of academic programs and support services.	

5. The Community College IR Shop and Accreditation: A Case Study <i>George Johnston</i> A theoretical model from the literature of higher education is used to explore institutional research practices supporting regional accreditation and institutional effectiveness and compare them among the different regional accrediting agencies.	53
6. Program Review and Institutional Effectiveness <i>Trudy Bers</i> Program reviews have multiple purposes and designs. While focused on units within the college, the compilation of reviews also provides evidence of institutional effectiveness.	63
7. Measuring Student Success <i>Christopher Baldwin, Estela Mara Bensimon, Alicia C. Dowd, Lisa Kleiman</i> Student success lies at the heart of both the community college mission and the practice of community college institutional effectiveness, yet measuring such success has proven quite challenging and difficult. Commonly used student success measures are presented, their strengths and weaknesses are analyzed, and innovative measures from several benchmark community colleges and programs are presented.	75
8. Stakeholders in the Institutional Effectiveness Process <i>Willard C. Hom</i> Many actors have an interest in the concept of institutional effectiveness, and differences in how these stakeholders perceive this concept can drive the need to negotiate these differences in perception.	89
9. The Future of Institutional Effectiveness <i>Richard L. Alfred</i> New concepts of institutional effectiveness are evolving and will continue to evolve as contextual conditions change, requiring community colleges to do more and better with less.	103
INDEX	115

# 7

*This chapter presents commonly used measures of student success, analyzes their strengths and weaknesses, and discusses innovative measures being used to benchmark community colleges throughout the United States.*

## Measuring Student Success

*Christopher Baldwin, Estela Mara Bensimon, Alicia C. Dowd,  
Lisa Kleiman*

Student success is at the heart of both institutional effectiveness and the community college mission, yet measuring such success at community colleges is problematic. This chapter highlights three efforts to grapple with this problem—a multistate work group of system- and state-level policy-makers to create an improved set of student success measures to gauge state and institutional performance; the development of benchmarking tools to improve racial/ethnic equity in college student outcomes and improve evaluation of institutional effectiveness in promoting student success; and an example of how one institution is leveraging state, regional, and national efforts to more effectively measure, and ultimately improve, student outcomes. Through these examples, we present the commonly used measures of student success, analyze their strengths and weaknesses, and discuss innovative measures that are being used to benchmark community colleges.

### **State Efforts to Use Better Measures to Drive Innovation and Improvement**

Achieving the Dream: Community Colleges Count is a national initiative to help more community college students succeed, particularly students of color and low-income status. The initiative operates on multiple fronts, including efforts on campuses and in research, public engagement, and public policy, and emphasizes the use of data to drive change. Achieving

the Dream (ATD) was launched in 2004 with funding provided by the Lumina Foundation for Education. Seven national partner organizations work with Lumina to guide the initiative and provide technical and other support to the colleges and states. Jobs for the Future (JFF) coordinates the effort to improve policies in the sixteen states that are participating in ATD and also directs the work of the Cross-State Data Work Group.

In 2006, six states—Connecticut, Florida, North Carolina, Ohio, Texas, and Virginia—came together to develop, test, and pilot a better way of measuring community college performance. As the original participants in the Cross-State Data Work Group, these states have argued that the current federal approach to measuring community colleges is incomplete and that a better set of measures is needed to measure student progression and completion. Informed by the educational pipeline research of the National Center for Higher Education Management Systems (Ewell, 2006), the Washington State “tipping points” study conducted by the Community College Research Center (Prince and Jenkins, 2005), this group piloted a more robust approach for tracking community college students. This approach is delineated in a policy brief, *Test Drive: Six States Pilot Better Ways to Measure and Compare Community College Performance* (Goldberger and Gerwin, 2008). Essentially the brief recommends that the Integrated Postsecondary Educational Data System Graduation Rate Survey needs to be augmented to include part-time students, extend the period of time for tracking students from four to six years, and incorporate successful transfers to a four-year institutions as an outcome measure.

Since the publication of *Test Drive*, Arkansas, Massachusetts, Oklahoma, and Washington have joined the early participants, and the group has further refined the final outcomes measures. These states also developed a set of intermediate metrics, or milestones, that will help states and institutions track students’ progression on their way toward successful completion of college. Starting with the foundation of identifying a more appropriate set of student success measures, the intermediate milestones were designed to answer some key questions:

- Are students being retained from term to term and year to year?
- What are the key credit thresholds that point to student progression and completion?
- Are students progressing through developmental education and into credit-bearing gatekeeper courses?
- Are students completing the gatekeeper courses within a certain period of time?

With these questions in mind, the states in the Cross-State Data Work Group labored for over a year to develop benchmarks for student success—a common set of final and intermediate measures with the consistent descriptions and data elements (Table 7.1). The group started by using

**Table 7.1. Achieving the Dream Cross-State Benchmarks for Student Success**

---

*Final outcome measures (measured at the fourth and the sixth years)*

Award of less than associate degree without transfer  
 Award of associate degree or higher without transfer  
 Award of less than associate degree and transferred  
 Award of associate degree or higher and transferred  
 Transferred without an award  
 Still enrolled with thirty or more college hours  
 Total success rate

*First-year milestones*

Persisted fall to spring  
 Passed 80 percent or more of attempted hours  
 Earned twenty-four or more hours

*Second- and third-year milestones*

Persisted fall to fall  
 Completed developmental math by year 2  
 Earned forty-eight or more hours  
 Passed gatekeeper English or higher by year 3  
 Passed gatekeeper math or higher by year 3

---

student-unit data to empirically test the impact of different measures on student success. For example, the group used Florida data to examine which credit thresholds were most predictive of student success at particular periods of time. After testing the measures empirically and coming to an agreement about cross-state definitions of the data elements, all members of the work group have run state-level aggregate analyses on the intermediate and final measures. The states have also disaggregated their analyses by subgroups that include age, enrollment status, level of college readiness, income (as measured by students receiving Pell grants), gender, and ethnicity.

Identifying the appropriate set of indicators for student success has been only part of the task of the Cross-State Data Work Group. Several states in the group have made substantial improvements in their technical and human data capacity by updating their data systems and hiring new staff. For example, Connecticut created an institutional research data mart to more effectively share data with its twelve community colleges. Leveraging national conversations about improving state data systems, the members of the work group recognized early on that meaningful improvements in student outcomes would be realized only if the state and institutional capacity to collect, analyze, and share data was strengthened. To guide discussions about data capacity, the work group also published a policy brief—*Power Tools: Designing State Community College Data and Performance Measurement System to Increase Student Success* (Goldberger,



2007)—that articulates the ideal components of a data and performance and measurement system and includes a self-assessment tool that states can use to gauge their own capacity.

Beyond the requisite technical and human capacity, many of the states in the data work group have developed innovative means for presenting and using their data to drive improvements, including publishing updated institutional comparisons on key measures of student success. The North Carolina Community College System regularly publishes the Data Trends series ([www.nccommunitycolleges.edu/Reports/research.htm](http://www.nccommunitycolleges.edu/Reports/research.htm)), which includes systemwide analyses of student success measures and institutional comparison data. The Florida Department of Education publishes *Fast Facts* ([www.fldoe.org/cc/OSAS/FastFacts/FastFacts.asp](http://www.fldoe.org/cc/OSAS/FastFacts/FastFacts.asp)) and *Zoom* ([www.fldoe.org/cc/OSAS/Evaluations/zoom.asp](http://www.fldoe.org/cc/OSAS/Evaluations/zoom.asp)), series of short summaries of recent research related to the Florida College System. Discussions about an improved approach to sharing success data spurred the Virginia Community College System to begin publishing the bimonthly *Student Success Snapshot* ([www.vccs.edu/Default.aspx?tabid=622](http://www.vccs.edu/Default.aspx?tabid=622)) in 2008 that benchmarks all community colleges on a specific success measure in each issue. These short reports are regularly shared with college presidents, state policymakers, and the public. The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board posts on its accountability Web site disaggregate data on a set of student success measures for the state's community colleges ([www.txhighereddata.org/Interactive/AccountabilityDRAFT/](http://www.txhighereddata.org/Interactive/AccountabilityDRAFT/)). The board provides all two-year institutions with reports on the academic performance of transfer students at Texas public universities, as well as information on employment and additional education that former students pursue.

The Achieving the Dream state teams have cited the substantial value of continued cross-state conversations, particularly the efforts of the Cross-State Data Work Group. The state data leads involved in this group have formed a powerful network that provides them with an opportunity to learn from each other's experiences and to convey their progress and challenges to others. The cross-state conversation around a common set of measures fosters ongoing dialogue about different state policy priorities and their impact on student progression and success. The consistent cross-state approach of this effort gives its benchmarks for student success substantial weight and credibility as national deliberations such as development of the Voluntary Framework of Accountability for community colleges play out.

The most significant impact of this work has been within states. *Benchmarks for Student Success* establishes a common language and set of expectations that, when shared among institutions and publicly, makes student progression and outcomes more transparent. Using these measures can help practitioners identify promising practices among peer institutions and help state policymakers integrate lessons and findings into ongoing policy discussions. In 2009, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation funded the Developmental Education Initiative, which includes the original

members of the data work group, to focus more deeply on improving outcomes for students who place into developmental education. The *Developmental Education Initiative: State Policy Framework and Strategy* (Jobs for the Future, 2010; www.deionline.org) includes a data-driven improvement process that makes the performance of institutions more transparent, recognizes colleges that are consistently reporting better student outcomes, and creates sustained peer networks of practitioners to learn from one another. States have a substantial and important role as conveners of their colleges to share knowledge and best practices and to scale promising innovations in the service of improved student outcomes. The measures developed by the Cross-State Data Work Group give states and institutions a powerful tool to facilitate these ongoing conversations.

### **Benchmarking for Organizational Learning and Change**

Around the same time that the Lumina Foundation launched *Achieving the Dream*, the foundation also funded two action research projects: *Equity for All* at the University of Southern California's Center for Urban Education (CUE) and the *Community College Student Success Project* at the University of Massachusetts Boston.<sup>1</sup> These projects forwarded two important goals: to improve racial/ethnic equity in college student outcomes and improve evaluation of institutional effectiveness in promoting student success. Both focused on organizational learning, emphasizing that “data don't drive”; decision makers do (Dowd, 2005). The two projects advanced understanding of what is needed to create a culture of inquiry (*Creating a Culture of Inquiry*, 2005), including data tools and norms of professional practice where data are used systematically for problem solving.

By developing the tools and techniques for inquiry, these projects fostered the use of data for decision-making and organizational change. As the Cross-State Data Work Group, coordinated by JFF, developed data standards and the *Benchmarks for Student Success*, *Equity for All*, led by Estela Bensimon, the *Community College Student Success Project*, led by Alicia Dowd, collaborated with practitioners across the country to determine how these data could best be used for change in higher education (Bensimon, Rueda, Dowd, and Harris, 2007; Dowd, 2008; Dowd and Tong, 2007).

*Equity for All* involved approximately one hundred individuals from nine California community colleges who analyzed their college data for student retention, transfer, and degree completion. All data were disaggregated by race and ethnicity, and the results revealed inequities among racial/ethnic groups in higher education based on four perspectives represented on CUE's *Equity Scorecard*: access, retention, transfer, and institutional effectiveness. The *Community College Student Success Project* involved a dozen practitioners from Massachusetts and other New England states in a think tank to assess standards for institutional assessment, peer

benchmarking, and evaluation.<sup>2</sup> Another sixteen community college practitioners served as the project's national advisory board. The advisory board met at conferences and symposia in 2004 and 2005 to inform the think tank proceedings and the drafting of reports based on their experiences with state policies, institutional assessment practices, and data systems from across the country.

Through these highly collaborative processes of data analysis and discussion of data standards, it became clear that even when data gain credibility at the level of state or federal policy, much more work remains to be done to motivate changes in college teaching, curriculum, and administration. The end users of the data need to be convinced that the problems revealed by the data are "real" and that the users can do something to address those problems. To build on what we learned through these two projects about using data for decision making to improve equity and institutional effectiveness, we teamed up at the CUE in 2007 and 2008 and launched the California Benchmarking Project.<sup>3</sup>

The purpose of the California Benchmarking Project was to foster growth in equity-based, practitioner-driven assessment as a way to improve community college student success across the entire curriculum, from basic skills to transfer-level courses. CUE researchers partnered with community college administrators, faculty, counselors, and institutional researchers. Three colleges convened evidence teams of approximately twelve to sixteen campus leaders at each college. These individuals participated in monthly meetings and project symposia facilitated by CUE researchers. They collaborated with CUE in developing and testing the use of equity-based assessment processes and tools. An additional 130 practitioners from twenty-five California community colleges participated in symposia and seminars hosted by CUE to pilot-test the equity-based assessment tools that had been developed.

These methods and tools were organized using the concepts of performance, diagnostic, and process benchmarking. These are briefly described here to set the context of the findings (see Dowd and Tong, 2007, for more information; for an application to degree completion in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics, see Dowd, Malcom, and Bensimon, 2009).

Through performance benchmarking, we asked our community college partners to examine successful course completion data and entering student cohort migration rates from basic skills classes to transfer classes, disaggregated by race/ethnicity, and asked them to set performance goals for the improvement of equity and effectiveness.

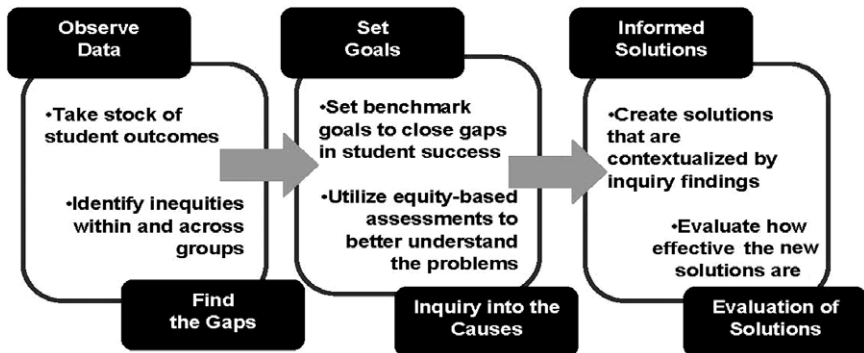
Through diagnostic benchmarking, we asked participants to use diagnostic indicators of equitable institutional performance to assess their practices in basic skills education. The evidence teams discussed existing standards of best practices and compared them to their own campus practices. They then reviewed best practice diagnostic indicators with a critical

eye to determine if they were likely to have a positive impact on racial/ethnic equity. CUE researchers drew on concepts of culturally responsive pedagogy, and we involved content-area experts in mathematics and composition in order to assess whether certain standards of practice were more inclusive than others of underrepresented students. The diagnostic benchmarking process involved data collection using protocols for on-campus observation, syllabi review, student assessment, and peer interviews.

For the purpose of process benchmarking, we facilitated hosted site visits for the evidence team members at peer colleges, which were selected through the diagnostic benchmarking step as having exemplary programs worthy of fuller understanding. The site visits enabled participants to learn strategic and operational details of organizational change processes that must be taken into account before adopting exemplary practices from another campus. For each site visit, CUE researchers created observation guides that helped prompt team members from each college to reflect on how to implement exemplary practices, such as in learning centers or student support programs on their campuses. In addition, the observation guide prompted team members to reflect on and discuss the benefits of the practices they observed and how these practices might or might not fit their campus culture and organizations.

All of these benchmarking activities engaged participants in a cycle of inquiry (illustrated in Figure 7.1) promoting reflection, goal setting, and expertise in problem solving to improve institutional equity and effectiveness. Through interviews with half of our inquiry team participants, we evaluated what the participants had experienced and learned through these types of benchmarking activities. The interviews were conducted using a semistructured interview protocol designed to elicit discussion about participants' motivations, reactions, experiences, learning, and behaviors.

Figure 7.1. California Benchmarking Project Benchmarking and Inquiry Process



Evaluations administered to participants in benchmarking symposia indicated that participants valued what they learned. These results are important because they demonstrate that community college practitioners are open to learning about their own practices and roles as change agents through close examination of college data. Three-quarters or more of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed that (1) the benchmarking activities and materials provided were useful and facilitated their learning, (2) they were willing to share equity-based assessment strategies on their campuses, and (3) they were willing to implement benchmarking strategies at their community college. We also found an increased capacity for data-based decision making and a greater awareness of the issues of racial/ethnic equity in student outcomes.

The CUE's studies have generated greater understanding of how to move beyond espousing a culture of inquiry to creating one through the use of specific institutional assessment processes and tools. CUE researchers continue to refine the benchmarking processes we have developed in collaboration with community college practitioners to increase racial/ethnic equity in student outcomes and improve institutional effectiveness. Our results to date show that when administrators, student affairs professionals, and faculty use data tools such as CUE's Equity Scorecard and our Benchmarking Equity and Student Success Tool to make meaning of student outcome data, dialogue and knowledge of what the data say about institutional effectiveness are enhanced. Participants also gain a keener understanding of comparative standards of instructional quality through the diagnostic and process benchmarking activities. In our experience, this often leads to a greater willingness to experiment with new instructional strategies and administrative structures.

Today a great deal of emphasis is placed on developing higher education data systems to track student progress and educational achievement. There is also a growing awareness that data-driven decision making must be complemented by a culture of inquiry. Practitioners need to be able to ask the right questions of available data and make changes in their educational practices as a result of what they learn. The CUE's work supports both of these priorities. Most other initiatives have focused on creating data standards and performance benchmarking indicators. With that foundation, greater attention can now be paid to using diagnostic and process benchmarking to promote organizational learning and change.

### **Tidewater Community College Student Success Initiatives**

In addition to participating in *Achieving the Dream: Community Colleges Count*, over the past several years, Tidewater Community College (TCC) in Norfolk, Virginia, launched several major initiatives centered on student success, including a Title III grant, the college's SACS Quality Enhancement

Plan (QEP), and a Virginia Community College System strategic plan. Each had a slightly different overall focus to help improve student success. As the institutional effectiveness (IE) office collected vast amounts of data in support of each effort, it became apparent that the college needed a plan to address student success in a way that made sense given the student population, and that it would be understandable to the college community at large, as well as the general public.

Most commonly used measures of student success have limitations primarily because graduation and retention rates have been defined historically in terms of traditional four-year student enrollment patterns. Federal graduation and retention rates exclude 65 percent or more of TCC's student body and fail to recognize students enrolled part time, those needing remedial work, or those who transfer or take a job prior to completing a degree. Pat Stanley, deputy assistant secretary for community colleges in the US Department of Education, remarked that the traditional student is as irrelevant today as the traditional family (Stanley, 2008). Ultimately success defined for TCC students is very different from student success defined for a highly selective four-year institution.

During the course of 2008-2009, TCC's IE office completed a literature review, examined student outcomes from the student success initiatives, and engaged the college leadership in dialogue about student success. As the college embarked on creating a new model for student success, four principles guided the work:

- To be inclusive rather than exclusive
- To acknowledge the difference in community college student enrollment patterns as compared to four-year traditional student patterns
- To expand the definition of success to recognize the mission of the community college and embrace the notion of open door institutions
- To better understand the intent and educational goals of the community college student

The new model was based on several underlying assumptions:

- That students enrolled in transfer or career and technical programs intend to complete the appropriate degree or award
- That students requiring developmental studies must progress to college-level math and English and successfully complete college-level course work to attain a degree
- That retention is the key to success:
  - Retention from the beginning to the end of each class period
  - Retention from the first semester to the second semester
  - Retention from the first year to the second year

The culmination of this work was a new definition for student success: achievement of an academic credential for program-placed students or the progression toward the credential within four years, to include students who have transferred prior to degree attainment or are still enrolled at the institution. Essentially TCC's student success definition recognized the diversity of the population, student enrollment patterns, and the role that the community college plays in the transfer process. The TCC student success model is built on three key elements—graduation, transfer out, and continued enrollment. Ultimately the sum of the three indicators is defined as TCC's advancement rate.

TCC's student success plan is grounded in a series of nine indicators that inform student success and are tracked over five years. Each indicator is measured every semester and has an annual target to reach the goal set for 2011-2012. The first indicator is the successful completion of a student development course within the first year of enrollment. There are also indicators for the successful completion of developmental math, college-level math, developmental English, college-level English, General Biology, General Chemistry, and online courses. The last three indicators are related to high-risk courses with low success rates. The ninth indicator is the completion of a newly implemented general education certificate, a milestone for those planning to complete the associate degree.

Cohorts of first-time, program-placed students are tracked over the course of four years to determine if they have graduated, have transferred out, or are still enrolled. Placement in any of the three categories is considered to be advancement toward a goal. In this case, enrollment patterns of most students are taken into account, and each cohort is inclusive of developmental and part-time students. As the nine indicator scores improve, the retention, graduation, and transfer-out rates are expected to improve. Each indicator is tracked in an annual scorecard, and the advancement rate is tracked annually as well. The advantage of the scorecard is that it shows if the advancement rate is improving. Annual tracking allows tracking along the four-year continuum and the opportunity to see if gains are being made each year. As Table 7.2 shows, the college advancement rate combines the nine indicators across time into an overall measure of student success.<sup>4</sup>

The indicators are what one would call leading indicators in economic theory. That is, they signal a future direction for the advancement rate. The indicators tend to increase or decrease before the advancement rate increases or decreases. For example, as the success rate for college-level English and math increases, one would expect to see the retention rate, and ultimately the graduation rate, increase at a future time. All degrees require college-level English, and increasing success rates should signal that more students are eligible to graduate. Similarly, if the successful completion of the student development course increases, one would expect to see the retention rate and the success rate in required courses increase in the near future. TCC's research showed a dramatic difference in successful comple-

Table 7.2 College Advancement Rate

2007-08 Advancement Rate		2008-09 Advancement Rate		2009-10 Advancement Rate		2010-11 Advancement Rate	
Fall 2004 cohort		Fall 2005 cohort		Fall 2006 cohort		Fall 2007 cohort	
	Year 1	Year 1	Year 1	Year 1	Year 1	Year 1	Year 1
Graduated	0.8%	Graduated	0.6%	Graduated	0.1%	Graduated	0.5%
Still Enrolled	52.9%	Still Enrolled	51.3%	Still Enrolled	54.0%	Still Enrolled	56.2%
Transferred	2.0%	Transferred	5.2%	Transferred	5.4%	Transferred	7.1%
<b>1-year Rate</b>	<b>55.6%</b>	<b>1-year Rate</b>	<b>57.1% ↑</b>	<b>1-year Rate</b>	<b>59.5% ↑</b>	<b>1-year Rate</b>	<b>63.8% ↑</b>
Year 2		Year 2		Year 2		Year 2	
Graduated	4.5%	Graduated	4.8%	Graduated	4.5%	Graduated	4.1%
Still Enrolled	32.8%	Still Enrolled	31.7%	Still Enrolled	36.6%	Still Enrolled	36.4%
Transferred	8.3%	Transferred	10.6%	Transferred	12.5%	Transferred	13.6%
<b>2-year Rate</b>	<b>45.5%</b>	<b>2-year Rate</b>	<b>47.1% ↑</b>	<b>2-year Rate</b>	<b>53.6% ↑</b>	<b>2-year Rate</b>	<b>54.1% ↑</b>
Year 3		Year 3		Year 3		Year 3	
Graduated	9.9%	Graduated	10.3%	Graduated	11.1%	Graduated	Sep 10
Still Enrolled	19.9%	Still Enrolled	19.9%	Still Enrolled	23.0%	Still Enrolled	Sep 10
Transferred	13.6%	Transferred	16.4%	Transferred	18.0%	Transferred	Jan 11
<b>3-year Rate</b>	<b>43.4%</b>	<b>3-year Rate</b>	<b>46.6% ↑</b>	<b>3-year Rate</b>	<b>52.1% ↑</b>	<b>3-year Rate</b>	Jan 11
Year 4		Year 4		Year 4		Year 4	
Graduated	13.4%	Graduated	14.2%	Graduated	Sep 10	Graduated	Sep 11
Still Enrolled	13.0%	Still Enrolled	13.4%	Still Enrolled	Sep 10	Still Enrolled	Sep 11
Transferred	14.3%	Transferred	20.2%	Transferred	Jan 11	Transferred	Jan 12
<b>4-year Rate</b>	<b>40.7%</b>	<b>4-year Rate</b>	<b>47.8% ↑</b>	<b>4-year Rate</b>	Jan 11	<b>4-year Rate</b>	Jan 12



tion rates for the first English course for those who completed the student development course (71 percent) and those who did not (59 percent). A similar difference played out for successful completion of the first math course for those who completed the student development course (59 percent versus 41 percent).

Although the IE office can help inform policies related to student success through meaningful data analyses, the real change must happen at the campus level and in the classroom. A cultural shift must occur from the right-to-fail mentality of the previous century to the right-to-succeed mentality of this century. Although the college has made gains over the past five years and has cast a spotlight on student progress, much work remains to be done. Some of the strategies employed include a more effective student orientation system, with attention to first-year students, better connections to public school systems to improve college readiness efforts, early intervention for academically challenged students, outreach to students with many accumulated credits, and implementation of milestones such as the General Education Certificate to encourage student progression to a final goal.

The key to effecting change is dialogue. Faculty must engage in discussion across the disciplines; student services staff should be immersed in discussing new ways to accommodate growing numbers of students through technology and other innovative methods; and college leaders should be engaged in national discussions to help foster direction and understanding of community colleges and their mission. Widespread discussion is essential to the discovery of new strategies and effective delivery methods that can improve education in the twenty-first century.

## Conclusion

No one formula ensures student success. While the basics may be the same across various institutions, no single plan can guarantee success in all community colleges. Each institution must know the population it serves and develop strategies and plans that complement the political realities and technical capacities of each state and school. Moving the numbers will not happen in a semester or a year. But by engaging in the discussion at local, state, and national levels, community college professionals can be part of the solution and help educate the public about the role of community colleges and those they serve. Finally, change happens in a classroom, not a boardroom. Faculty and staff must be key players in the dialogue on student success and be empowered to address barriers to success. Broad-based campus involvement, data-based improvement plans, and accountability measures grounded in meaningful data analysis are solid ingredients for a good start. Campus culture must be transformed to one where the community truly believes in the right to succeed.

## Notes

1. Equity for All was also funded by the Chancellor's Office of the California Community Colleges.
2. The think tank was hosted by the New England Resource Center for Higher Education at the University of Massachusetts Boston.
3. In 2007-2008, the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation and the Ford Foundation funded the Center for Urban Education to develop tools and processes for benchmarking equity and effectiveness through the center's California Benchmarking Project.
4. The College Advancement Rate is based somewhat loosely on the work of the Joint Commission on Accountability Reporting, which developed a student advancement rate in the mid-1990s. See Head (1995) and Joint Commission on Accountability Reporting (1996).

## References

- Bensimon, E. M., Rueda, R., Dowd, A. C., and Harris III, F. "Accountability, Equity, and Practitioner Learning and Change." *Metropolitan*, 2007, 18(3), 28-45.
- Center for Community College Student Engagement. *Benchmarking and Benchmarks: Effective Practice with Entering Students*. Retrieved from [http://www.nisod.org/uploads/waiwaiole\\_9551\\_4.pdf](http://www.nisod.org/uploads/waiwaiole_9551_4.pdf) on February 1, 2011.
- Dowd, A. C. *Data Don't Drive: Building a Practitioner-Driven Culture of Inquiry to Assess Community College Performance*. Indianapolis, Ind.: Lumina Foundation for Education, 2005.
- Dowd, A. C. "The Community College as Gateway and Gatekeeper: Moving Beyond the Access 'Saga' to Outcome Equity." *Harvard Educational Review*, 2008, 77(4), 407-419.
- Dowd, A. C., Malcom, L. E., and Bensimon, E. M. *Benchmarking the Success of Latina and Latino Students in STEM to Achieve National Graduation Goals*. Los Angeles: Center for Urban Education, University of Southern California, 2009.
- Dowd, A. C., and Tong, V. P. "Accountability, Assessment, and the Scholarship of 'Best Practice.'" In J. C. Smart (ed.), *Handbook of Higher Education*. New York: Springer Publishing, 2007.
- Ewell, P. "Reaching Consensus on Common Indicators: A Feasibility Analysis." Paper presented at the meeting of State Student Data Project for Community College Bridges to Opportunity and Achieving the Dream, San Antonio, Tex., 2006.
- Goldberger, S. *Power Tools: Designing State Community College Data and Performance Measurement Systems to Increase Student Success*. Boston: Jobs for the Future, 2007.
- Goldberger, S., and Gerwin, C. *Test Drive: Six States Pilot Better Ways to Measure and Compare Community College Performance*. Boston: Jobs for the Future, 2008.
- Head, R. "Accountability Reporting: JCAR Student Success, Persistence, Transfer, Graduation and Licensure Rates." Paper presented at the Joint Commission on Accountability Reporting, Washington, D.C., Oct. 1995.
- Jobs for the Future. *The Developmental Education Initiative: State Policy Framework and Strategy*. Boston: Jobs for the Future, 2010.
- Joint Commission on Accountability Reporting. *CAR Technical Conventions Manual*. Washington, D.C.: American Association of States Colleges and Universities, American Association of Community Colleges, and National Association of State Universities and Land-Grant Colleges, 1996. Retrieved from [http://www.aascu.org/pdf/jcar\\_technical.pdf](http://www.aascu.org/pdf/jcar_technical.pdf) on February 1, 2011.

New England Resource Center for Higher Education. "Creating a Culture of Inquiry." Boston: New England Resource Center for Higher Education, 2005.

Prince, D., and Jenkins, D. *Building Pathways to Success for Low-Skill Adult Students: Lessons for Community College Policy and Practice from a Statewide Longitudinal Tracking Study*. New York: Community College Research Center, Teachers College, Columbia University, 2005.

Stanley, P. "Creating a Culture of Evidence." Paper presented at the Southeastern Association of Community College Research Conference, St. Petersburg, Fla., Aug. 2008.

*CHRISTOPHER BALDWIN is a program director at Jobs for the Future in Boston.*

*ESTELA MARA BENSIMON is professor of higher education and codirector of the Center for Urban Education at the University of Southern California.*

*ALICIA C. DOWD is associate professor of higher education and codirector of the Center for Urban Education at the University of Southern California.*

*LISA KLEIMAN recently retired after thirty years as the founding director of institutional effectiveness at Tidewater Community College in Norfolk, Virginia.*