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IMPLEMENTING SOCIAL EQUITY IN THE PUBLIC SECTOR: HOW COMMUNITY
COLLEGES ACHIEVE THE DREAM

A dissertation in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of
Philosophy at Virginia Commonwealth University.

By

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Abstract

IMPLEMENTING SOCIAL EQUITY IN THE PUBLIC SECTOR: HOW COMMUNITY COLLEGES ACHIEVE THE DREAM

By Kasey J. Martin, Ph.D.

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy at Virginia Commonwealth University.

Virginia Commonwealth University, 2014

Major Director: Susan T. Gooden, Ph.D., Professor
L. Douglas Wilder School of Government and Public Affairs

Equity is an American ideal, one that is considered the cornerstone to good governance (Gooden, 2011). Achieving equity requires the eradication of racial disparities in opportunities and outcomes, particularly in education. Creating equitable educational experiences at community colleges is the focus of this research.

The purpose of study is to examine the issue of social equity within community colleges in an effort to understand: (1) their efforts to promote student success through equity; (2) their commitment to social equity; and (3) the institutional change that is necessary to create an institutional culture that values social equity and is accountable for equitable student outcomes. Social equity is intrinsic for the promotion of student success within community colleges.

The primary findings of this study are the:

- Leadership at the president and senior administrator level is necessary for the conceptualization and communication of an institutional vision of equity.

- Once leadership direction and commitment has been established, broad engagement across the institution is necessary for implementation of institutional changes needed to achieve equity.

- Improving student success was defined as the means for achieving equity by Round 1 Achieving the Dream colleges.

- It is vitally important to have the institutional research capacity that allows for analysis of student progression data, examination of achievement gaps through the disaggregation of student outcome data, evaluation of efforts implemented to improve equitable student outcomes and the overall culture of data informed decision making.

- Round 1 Achieving the Dream colleges are more comfortable with the "lift all boats" approach to student success versus a targeted approach based on data disaggregation and achievement gaps.

To implement equity, it is important for community colleges to respond to outcome disparities on an institutional level by committing to the goal of equity. This study shows that recognizing inequity is the first step toward achieving equity. The pursuit of social equity within our public institutions and those that they serve is imperative to a nation that values democratic ideal of equality.

CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION, BACKGROUND, AND OVERVIEW

Public administration should be dedicated to the setting of fair and just policies in guiding their agencies and to the fair and just implementation of those policies. – H. George Frederickson

Introduction

Social mobility and the idea that everyone can achieve the American dream are strongly held values. Equity is an American ideal, one that is considered the cornerstone to good governance (Gooden, 2011). The implementation of social equity by public officials, administrators, institutions, communities, regions, and states has never been more vital to the future economic growth and prosperity of the United States. It allows for the "just and fair inclusion into a society in which everyone can participate and prosper" (Treuhaft, Blackwell, & Pastor, 2011, p. 4). Achieving equity requires the eradication of racial disparities in opportunities and outcomes, particularly in education. Creating equitable educational experiences at community colleges is the focus of this research.

Education, especially postsecondary education, has created access to prosperity and the American dream (Rhoads & Valadez, 1996). Historian James Truslow Adams coined the term the "American Dream" in *Epic of America (*1931)*, describing the nation as a place "where toil would reap a sure reward" (p. 69) and glorifying the American frontier as the origin of the American Dream as well as most of the nation's virtues and

values. Hochschild (1995) defines four central tenets of the American Dream. First, everyone has access to the American Dream regardless of family background or personal history. Second, the American Dream contains reasonable anticipation, although not promise of success. Third, one can achieve success and the American Dream through actions and traits under one's own control. Fourth, the reason people try to attain the American Dream and success is because true success is associated with virtue.

Postsecondary education historically has been one of the most important long-term investments individuals can make in their economic future. Educated workers are more productive, earn more, and pay more taxes (Institute for Higher Education Policy, 2005). An individual who holds a baccalaureate will earn twice as much over his or her lifetime when compared to someone who attains only a high school diploma (U.S. Department of Education [USDOE], 2006). Not only is higher education a high probability on investment, but access to postsecondary education has become the means of economic success and upward mobility in society. More postsecondary education will yield not only a more dynamic and vibrant economy, but a more equitable society (Carnevale & Rose, 2011).

In the 21st century, America's ability to educate its people "will increasingly determine its economic competitiveness as the country shifts from an industrial to an information economy" (Carnevale & Desrochers, 2004, p. 39). Postsecondary education plays a vital role in the ability of the United States to sustain and strengthen the nation's economic and strategic leadership in a globalized world. The increasing diversity in the United States and the new requirements for a more highly educated

workforce are increasing and are expected to increase in the future (Marx, 2005). It is projected that 90 percent of the jobs experiencing the most growth in the "knowledge-driven economy" will necessitate some form of higher education (USDOE, 2006, p. 1). The Center of Education and the Workforce at Georgetown University projects that 45 percent of jobs in 2018 will require at least an associate's degree (Carnevale, Smith, & Strohl, 2010).

The Obama administration has specifically set the goal of having the world's highest proportion of college graduates by 2020 (Carnevale & Rose, 2011). To achieve this goal for college completion, and ensure that America's students and workers receive the education and training needed for the jobs of today and tomorrow, President Obama and his administration are working to make college more accessible, affordable, and attainable for all American families (American Graduation Initiative, 2010).

The United States is no longer gaining ground in the educational attainment of its population from one generation to the next. According to the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (2010), the United States ranks 12th out of 36 developed countries in the number of 25 to 34-year old adults with some type of college degree. Postsecondary education is a key path to upward mobility in the United States. Figure 1 illustrates the economic mobility of a college degree for children born into a low-income family. Children born into the lowest economic quintile have a much better chance of escaping poverty as adults if they earn a college degree. Although the importance of obtaining a higher education is clear, a gap exists in the attainment of higher education among first-generation college students, low-income students and
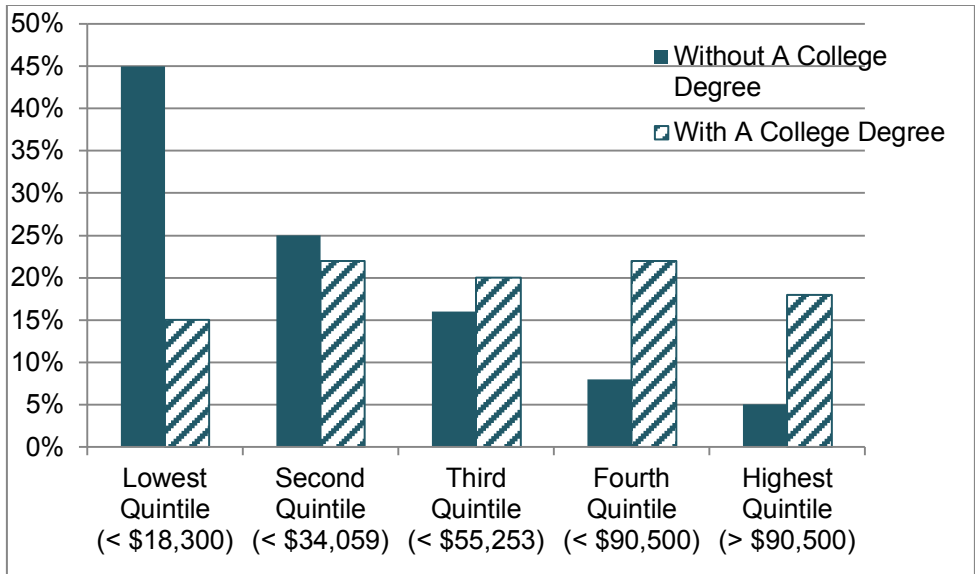
Figure 1. Economic mobility of a college degree for low-income children.
Adapted from Brookings Institution tabulations of PSID data 2010

students of color, and those of other students. In 2012, only 52 percent of high school

graduates from families with incomes below $18,300 and 65 percent of high school

graduates from middle quintile ($34,060–$55,253) enrolled immediately in college

compared to 82 percent of high school graduates from families with incomes above

$90,500 (Baum, Ma, & Payea, 2013). A similar gap in college enrollment is

experienced by first-generation college students. Thirty-six percent of high school

students whose parents have less than a high school diploma and 54 percent of high

school students whose parents have a high school diploma or its equivalent attend

college directly after high school. Comparatively, 82 percent of high school students

whose parents have a baccalaureate degree attend college directly after high school

(MDC Inc., 2004). Ultimately, 55 percent of all the students whose parents have a

college degree obtained a college or postgraduate degree, compared with just 23

percent of the first-generation college students (Baum et al., 2013).

4

There are racial disparities in higher education attainment. Figure 2 provides a snapshot of the educational attainment gap by race for workers aged 25 to 64 in the United States (U.S. Census Bureau, 2009). As this figure depicts, Asians (59 percent) and Whites (34 percent) between the age of 25 to 64 have the highest attainment of bachelor's degrees or higher. At eight to nine percent, the earning of associate's degrees is low for all groups. Blacks (27 percent) and Latinos (26 percent) within the same age range are more likely to have completed some college rather than earning a degree at the associate's, bachelor's, or higher level. The potential earning increase from college education is not being realized by Blacks and Latinos at the same rate as Asians and Whites.
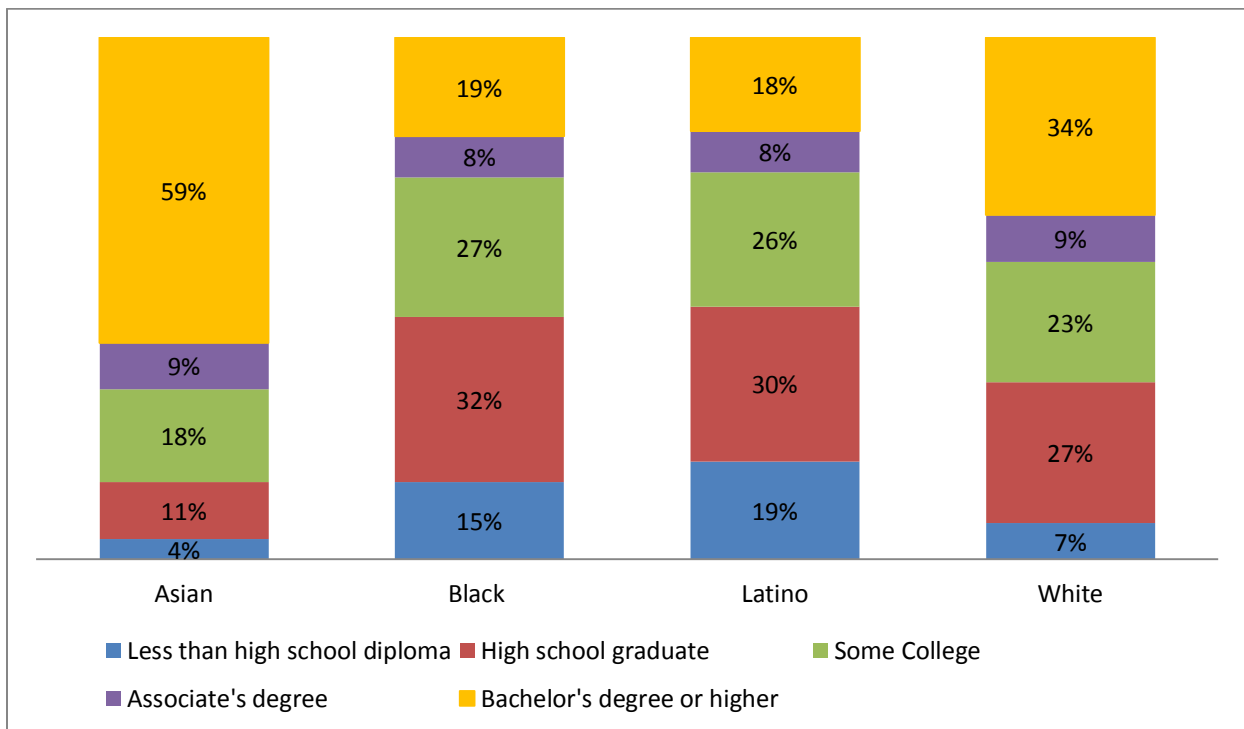
Figure 2. Educational attainment by race.
Adapted from "America's Tomorrow: Equity is the Superior Growth Model by S. Treuhaft, S., A.G. Blackwell, & M. Pastor, 2011. Report prepared for PolicyLink.

The educational success and achievement of low-income students and students of color is distressingly low in each sector of the educational pipeline, a condition that challenges both the social and economic well-being of our country (Bok, 2003; Hunter & Bartee, 2003; Olneck, 2005). The gap in attainment among racial groups in American society is not a new phenomenon. However, with growing competitiveness in the world of workforce preparation, and scarce resources in the form of social services, the educational achievement gap becomes extremely important (Carnevale & Strohl, 2010). If the achievement gap is not addressed, the economic livelihood of the United States and social welfare of the American populace are likely to suffer (Lumina Foundation for Education, 2010).

Purpose of Study

The purpose of study is to examine the issue of social equity within community colleges in an effort to understand: (a) their efforts to promote student success through equity, (b) their commitment to social equity, and (c) the institutional change that is necessary to create a culture that values social equity and is accountable for equitable student outcomes. Social equity is intrinsic for the promotion of student success within community colleges. The postsecondary system of most relevance in regard to access, remediation, and equity of student outcomes is the community college system (Horn & Nevill, 2006). Community colleges are designed to be open-door institutions playing a crucial role in providing access to college (Brint & Karabel, 1989). Enrolling a disproportionate number of first-generation students, low-income students, and students of color, these institutions have been instrumental in providing underserved student

populations with the opportunity to pursue higher education (Bailey, Jenkins, &

Leinbach, 2005).

During the decades of rapid expansion of community colleges, these access

considerations were paramount. More recently educators, policy makers, researchers,

and foundations have increasingly focused on the actual experience of students

enrolled in these institutions. Overall, community college students have low persistence

and completion rates. While their open access policies provide opportunities for millions

of students to pursue higher education, research shows that far too few of these

students succeed (Bailey, Calcagno, Jenkins, Kienzl, & Leinbach, 2005). The

community college is in need of alteration having not fulfilled its promise (Cohen &

Brawer, 1996; Dougherty, 1994; Frye, 1994; McGrath & Spear, 1991).

Community colleges have the toughest job in American higher education. These

are open-admissions institutions. They serve disproportionately high numbers of poor

students and students of color. Many of their students are the ones who were least well

served by their previous public school education and therefore most likely to have

academic as well as fiscal challenges. Community college students are three to four

times more likely than students in 4-year colleges to reflect factors that put them at risk

of not completing their education. Creating an environment in which community

colleges can focus on the success of their students is key to the fulfillment of the

institutions' missional promise (Martinez & Fernandez, 2004; McClenney, 2004).

Community colleges are considered society's institutions of transformation,

responsible for developing the whole person regardless of race, gender, and

socioeconomic status. More than 1,200 community colleges in the United States

provide open admissions, developmental education to address areas of college preparation deficiencies, affordable tuition, and a solid commitment to their community-based instructional mission (American Association of Community Colleges [AACC], 2011). Because of their open admissions policy, accessibility, and affordability, community colleges attract more students than ever before (Dowd, 2007, 2003). Their relative low cost and accessibility make them especially important for low-income students, students of color, and first-generation college students.

Access, though, does not always lead to success for community college students. A study conducted by Bailey (2006) found that among students seeking an associate's degree or higher, only 53 percent earned a degree or transferred to a 4-year institution within 8 years of initial enrollment. Another study conducted by the National Center for Education Statistics [NCES] (2003) found that, of all students who enrolled in community colleges in 1995-1996, only 35 percent attained a certificate or degree within 6 years. Nationally, community colleges experience a 50 percent dropout rate from the first to the second year of enrollment, where low-income students and students of color are often most likely to drop out (McGuinness & Jones, 2003). Among students who enrolled for the first time at a 2-year college in 2003-2004, only 18 percent attained a certificate or degree within 3 years. The large majority remained enrolled without a degree (37 percent) or were no longer enrolled at any institution by June 2006 (45 percent) (Berkner, Choy, & Hunt-White, 2008). Moreover, completion rates for African-American, Hispanic, Native American, and low-income students are lower than the overall rates, indicating inequitable racial and income gaps (Dougherty & Kienzl, 2006). While greater access to higher education for students of color is an absolute imperative,

it is only part of the equation. Ensuring their academic success and readiness to thrive

in a knowledge economy and global marketplace remains the ultimate goal (Day &

Newburger, 2002).

Statement of the Problem

In today's economy, education and economic opportunity are inseparable. The

problem of closing the college education gap and achieving equitable outcomes for

historically under-represented students is a problem of institutional responsibility and

performance, rather than exclusively a problem related to student accountability,

motivation, and academic preparation (Bauman, Bustillos, Bensimon, Brown, & Bartee,

2005). The community college is a portal of educational opportunity, individual

development, economic power, and social mobility. Education beyond high school is

increasingly essential to people who want to earn a middle-class income, and

community colleges play a crucial role in preparing individuals for careers and

baccalaureate programs (Dowd, 2003). The pursuit of social equity within our public

institutions and those that they serve is imperative to a nation that values equality. The

ability of community colleges to improve the human capital of the individual, as well as

the social capital of the community it serves, makes it an important goal to ensure that

its services are provided in an equitable manner.

Research Questions

Within higher education, community colleges often serve the neediest students,

the most academically underprepared, and the economically disenfranchised.

Community colleges are critical to America's effort to promote educational equity

(Dowd, 2007). Because academically underprepared students tend to come from low-

income households, the existence and outcomes of community college developmental programs affect the ability of the United States to achieve educational access and equity goals. Access through an open admission policy is only one step toward educational equity. While equity is recognized as an American value, it is often difficult to define and measure (Svara & Brunet, 2004). The purpose of this study was to examine the efforts of community colleges, as public institutions, to promote equity and eliminate achievement gaps for low-income, first-generation, and students of color. This research utilizes a case study approach by focusing on community colleges participating in a national educational initiative, "Achieving the Dream." Using a case study approach the following research questions are used to guide this study:

- How are Achieving the Dream Round 1 community colleges conceptualizing a vision of equity?

- What is the role of data in helping Achieving the Dream Round 1 community colleges become equity focused?

- How is equity implemented, measured, and achieved by Achieving the Dream Round 1 community colleges?

The research questions that guide this study explore how community colleges make a commitment to equitable student outcomes, how this commitment addresses the national imperative for creating an educated workforce, and what lessons can be learned from community colleges grappling with achievement gaps—disparities in their student outcomes for first-generation and low-income students.

Each research question contributes uniquely to the accomplishment of the goals and objectives of this study.

1. How are Achieving the Dream Round 1 community colleges conceptualizing a vision of equity?

This research question considers how community colleges define what equity means to their institution, the role of college leadership in the creating a vision of equity and promoting student success. In order to understand how community colleges work toward equitable outcomes for their students, it is important to examine their commitment to institutional change, to implementing policies and practices that support students with significant barriers.

2. What is the role of data in helping Achieving the Dream Round 1 community colleges become equity focused?

This research question explores the use of data by community colleges in understanding the inequities within their institutions by continually tracking their progress against their equity values. Community colleges are public institutions that are accountable to both the students they serve and the taxpayers that fund them. The careful collection and examination of data provides a culture of evidence that promotes accountability. By understanding student progression data, student achievement gaps, and barriers to student success, community colleges are able to take action to ensure their accountability. The premise is that for institutional change to occur, "Individuals must see on their own and as clearly as possible the magnitude of inequities. They then must analyze and integrate the meaning of these inequities so they are moved to act upon them" (Bensimon, 2004, p. 46).

3. How is equity implemented, measured, and achieved by Achieving the Dream Round 1 community colleges?

This research question explores the implementation of strategies or interventions by the community colleges to improve student outcomes, how the community colleges track their progress towards achieving their goals, and equity outcomes.

Examining the implementation of equity is critical to understanding how community colleges work toward eliminating achievement gaps of low-income, first generation, and students of color. "Concern about the implementation of programs stems from the recognition that policies cannot be understood in isolation from the means of their execution" (Elmore, 1978 p.186).

The program implementation phase addresses the methods or procedures for how the program's design will be carried out. It is the action plan for the program design. During the implementation phase, the program developer must decide how, when, where, to what extent, and how often the program will be conducted. These elements should be purposive, planned, and carried out in a way that allows an unbiased independent observer to determine if the activity is being carried out as planned and to what extent (Fixsen, Naoom, Blase, Friedman, & Wallace, 2005). It is also critical that the program developers identify program goals, content, objectives, indicators, and outcomes. These factors should be based on characteristics of the target audience and the environment in which the program will exist (Wells, 2005). By exploring not only what the community colleges want to achieve but their strategies and objectives for achieving their goal, it provides insight for other community colleges that want to tackle the inequities within their institution.

The full implementation of equity requires a vision of equity, a clear definition of what equity means for their institution and the students they serve, and measurable

outcomes to gauge progress made toward their goals. For example: What are the college's indicators for measuring equity? What is the role of equity in the mission or strategic planning process of the college? Is equity an extension of the college's student success agenda? This research question explores equity within the unique context of each institution.

Significance of the Research

This research is significant for multiple reasons. The growing gaps in postsecondary education, access, and success of students based on their race and ethnicity, and socioeconomic status undermine the goal of equity delineated in the Higher Education Act (HEA) of 1965. As outlined in Textbox 1, the central policy goal of the HEA is to broaden access to higher education, not only in terms of initial enrollment but also in terms of successful completion of a degree or certificate program for all students, but especially for first generation, low-income students, and students of color (Lumina Foundation for Education, 2004). The HEA also outlines the role of colleges and universities in "assisting the people of the United States in the solution of community problems such as housing, poverty, government, recreation, employment, youth opportunities, transportation, health, and land use" (HEA, 1965, Section 101). This research reaches beyond the goal of equity to the measurement and understanding of what leads to forward movement toward equity and the closing of achievement gaps. Finally, this research also contributes to the scholarship of social equity within the field of public administration, by providing a governmental model of an institutional commitment to social equity.

Textbox 1. Higher Education Act of 1965

Higher Education Act of 1965

The Higher Education Act of 1965 (HEA) was created to increase educational access and persistence for underserved populations: first generation, low-income, and ethnically diverse students (Boone, 1992; Camp, Thompson, & Crain, 1990; Vacca, 1975). It is one of the most important federal higher education legislations designed to advance educational and social equity, HEA is the federal intention to advance higher education opportunity for all who were academically able regardless of need. It represents a turning point in the federal relationship to higher education in America (Gifford, 1986). HEA featured student financial aid assistance and included the first federally funded scholarships for students, Educational Opportunity Grants and were awarded solely based upon need (Gladieux & Walanin, 1976). The original act contained eight sections:

Title I: Supports community services and funds continuing education programs and extension courses focused on community problems and challenges

Title II: Provides grants to institutions to improve library resources, training, and research capabilities

Title III: Makes funding available to enhance academic quality at all impoverished colleges; Benefits both Historically Black Colleges and Universities and Hispanic Serving Institutions; Creates U.S. Department of Education's Strengthening Institutions Program which provides grants to institutions serving higher percentages of low-income students

Title IV: Assists students by supporting undergraduate scholarships, loans with reduced interest rates, and financial need and establish programs to encourage able but needy high school students to attend college

Title V: Improves the quality of teaching by funding teacher preparation programs that support future teachers of elementary and secondary schools; Establishes an Advisory Council on Quality Teacher Preparation to review and improve teacher effectiveness;

Title VI: Provides matching federal funds to improve classroom instruction;

Title VII: Amends Higher Education Facilities Act of 1963 by allowing the transfer of resources between two and four year institutions

Title VIII: Provides clarification on terms and definitions used within HEA

HEA of 1965 has undergone several amendments and reauthorizations: 1968, 1972, 1976, 1980, 1986, 1992, 1998, 2003, and 2008.

Democratic Principles and Social Equity

Core democratic values are the fundamental beliefs and constitutional principles of American society. These values are expressed in the Declaration of Independence, and the United States Constitution. These values are also expressed in laws and policies of the United States, as well as in speeches and writings of many notable American leaders (e.g., Thomas Jefferson, James Madison, Abraham Lincoln, W.E.B. DuBois, and contemporary leaders such as Franklin D. Roosevelt, Martin Luther King Jr., John F. Kennedy, and Barack Obama) (Dahl, 1977). It is the basic right of citizenship to be exercised under conditions of freedom, equality, transparency, and responsibility, with due respect for the plurality of views, and in the interest of the polity as an ideal. Democracy aims essentially to preserve and promote the dignity and fundamental rights of the individual, to achieve social justice, foster the economic and social development of the community, strengthen the cohesion of society, and enhance national tranquility (Stone, 2002). The *American Creed* allows the paradox of freedom to coexist with oppression. Gunnar Myrdal (1944) defined the *American Creed* as that which unites citizens with a common *social ethos* that is contradicted by our heterogeneity in human relations. Myrdal also described the American Creed as an idealistic value of equality that Americans aspire to but do not practice.

The United States has a history of being verbally committed to "preserving liberty and securing justice for all, but we have fallen short of achieving these ends, and achieving equality has been a continuing challenge" (Johnson & Svara, 2011, xi). Social equity has come to encompass the many complex issues associated with fairness, justice, and equality in public administration (Frederickson, 2010). The

concept or value of equity is one that permeates society, government, and the field of public administration. Public institutions have long been concerned about efficiency, economy, and effectiveness. In a society where disparities of income, wealth, and access to opportunity continue to increase with no sign of abatement, it is important to understand how public institutions value social equity in access to services and outcomes.

The inadequate and inequitable opportunities offered today are among the greatest challenges facing America's social institutions, and pose a major threat to our democracy. By 2030, the majority of those seeking access to higher education and entering the workforce will be people of color. "Equity is not only a matter of social justice or morality: It is an economic necessity" (Treuhaft et al., 2011, p. 4). Social equity is an ideal that promotes a model of growth that allows for the just and fair inclusion into a society in which everyone can participate and prosper. By addressing the achievement gaps of those who are the furthest behind, America not only begins to solve its most serious challenges, but also creates the conditions that allow all to flourish. This requires addressing racial disparities in all areas of society, but especially in education. A growth model based upon social equity tackles racial disparities in education and employment by lifting up those at the bottom of the income spectrum, growing the middle class, and providing upward mobility for all (Carnevale et al., 2010).

Case Study: Community Colleges and Achieving the Dream

Education is often viewed as the great potential equalizer in achieving one's goals in life (Valverde, 2003). The existence of differential educational outcomes is a pressing educational concern that has attracted national attention and sparked national

and state initiatives at the secondary and postsecondary levels. National initiatives by charitable foundations and the USDOE are focused on developing policy and institutional practices that will improve the success rates for community college students. This study utilizes the Achieving the Dream: Community Colleges Count initiative as a case study for exploring, understanding, and learning from the community colleges' efforts to (a) promote student success through equity, (b) understand their commitment to social equity, and (c) examine the institutional change that is necessary to create an institutional culture that values social equity and is accountable for equitable student outcomes. The potential of community colleges to serve as a pipeline for low-skill adults to college and employment is recognized by these foundations (Bond, 2009; Bailey, 2008; Dowd, 2007).

Achieving the Dream: Community Colleges Count is a multiyear national initiative launched by Lumina Foundation for Education in 2004 to improve student success at community colleges. The initiative is particularly concerned about student groups who traditionally have faced significant barriers to success, including students of color and low-income students. Achieving the Dream works on multiple fronts, including changes in the institutional practices and policies at participating colleges; research into effective practices at community colleges; public policy work; and outreach to communities, businesses, and the public. It emphasizes the use of data to drive change. The initiative promotes, "ground-level strategies to accomplish big-picture outcomes" (Achieving the Dream, 2009, p. 3). The initiative is also particularly concerned with promoting an equity-based agenda and including institutions with high

concentrations of low-income students, students of color, and nontraditional students (Rutschow et al., 2011).

Conceived as an initiative by the Lumina Foundation for Education and seven founding partner organizations, today, Achieving the Dream is the most comprehensive nongovernmental reform movement for student success in higher education history. With 160 community colleges and institutions, more than 100 coaches and advisors, and 15 state policy teams—working throughout 30 states and the District of Columbia— Achieving the Dream helps 3.5 million community college students have a better chance of realizing greater economic opportunity and achieving their dreams. In 2010, the Achieving the Dream initiative transitioned into Achieving the Dream, Inc., a national nonprofit organization, dedicated to helping more community college students, particularly low-income students and students of color, stay in school and earn a college certificate or degree. Evidence-based, student-centered, and built on the values of equity and excellence, Achieving the Dream is closing achievement gaps and accelerating student success nationwide by guiding evidence-based institutional change, influencing public policy, generating knowledge, and engaging the public (Achieving the Dream, 2011).

This research is based on data derived from the experiences of the first round of colleges chosen to participate in Achieving the Dream. In 2004 these colleges, located in Florida, New Mexico, North Carolina, Texas, and Virginia, were chosen for the initial Achieving the Dream efforts, largely because those states were perceived as having favorable climates for policy change, including stable funding and high-level support for community colleges (MDC Inc., 2006).

Selection of Round 1 Community Colleges

The Lumina Foundation for Education and the founding partners decided to initially launch Achieving the Dream in five states—Florida, New Mexico, North Carolina, Texas, and Virginia—rather than making grants to institutions nationwide. Their strategy was to invest in a critical mass of institutions in a select group of states to increase Achieving the Dream's success of influencing policy and getting government actors involved. Policy decisions affecting community colleges are mainly made at the state level. Florida, New Mexico, North Carolina, Texas, and Virginia were chosen for the first round of grant-making because they serve large portions of low-income students and students of color and had favorable climates for policy change (Brock et al., 2007).

The national partners also decided that the initiative should focus on community colleges that served the largest numbers of disadvantaged students. Based on these criteria, approximately 100 institutions in the five states were eligible to participate in Achieving the Dream. All were invited to apply, and 60 submitted applications. The selection of colleges was based on a competitive process.

Representatives from the national partners and several independent reviewers scored the proposals based on four criteria:

- the strength of the core teams that the colleges proposed to lead the initiative;
- the colleges' stated commitment to the goals of the initiative—in particular, to developing a 'culture of evidence';
- a description of at least three programs or strategies that the colleges had implemented to increase student achievement; and
- the colleges' vision for how participation in the initiative would lead to improvements in student outcomes. (Brock et al., 2007, p. 12)

In addition, the colleges were asked to present basic data on enrollment and graduation rates for all students and disaggregated by race and ethnicity, to see whether they could perform some of the types of analysis that would be required for Achieving the Dream initiative. Based upon the proposal scores, 26 colleges were selected for Round 1. The colleges are diverse in size, location, and student characteristics. The racial and ethnic composition of each of the colleges reflects the demographic characteristics of their states. For example, the colleges with the highest percentage of Hispanic students are located in Texas and New Mexico. The colleges with the highest percentage of African-American students tend to be located in Virginia, North Carolina, and Florida. In New Mexico, two Achieving the Dream colleges predominantly enroll Native American students (Brock et al., 2007).

Achieving the Dream Grant

Achieving the Dream provided the first round of colleges with both monetary and technical support to help with data collection, analysis, and implementation of their selected program strategies. The 2004 colleges were awarded an initial yearlong planning grant of $50,000 each, followed by annual grants of $100,000 for 4 years ($450,000 total). Additionally, each college received technical support from an external coach and data facilitator; complimentary registrations to attend the annual Achieving the Dream Strategy Institute for 5 years; communications support; and access to Achieving the Dream tools, guidebooks, and equity resources. The external coach and data facilitator were provided to help colleges navigate the institutional change required to promote student success. The external coach is typically a retired community college

administrator and the data facilitator is an expert in using data to help guide institutional decisions.

The Concept and Framework of Achieving the Dream

Achieving the Dream's student-centered vision is focused on creating a culture of evidence on community college campuses in which data and evidence drive broad-based institutional efforts to improve student outcomes. This multifaceted initiative seeks change at the institutional level as well as in state and national policy. Through the collaborative work of its partner organizations, Achieving the Dream provides colleges extensive supports in collecting and analyzing student data; designing, implementing, and evaluating intervention strategies; and broadening knowledge among stakeholders about policies and programs that contribute to student success (Jenkins, 2006). The initiative is changing the conversation about student outcomes. Achieving the Dream has helped drive student success to the top of the community college change agenda (McClenney, 2008). The imperative to transform community colleges into learning organizations dedicated to student success requires systematic cultural change at most institutions. With concentrations of low-income and students of color, the participating colleges' undergraduates are also largely underprepared for college-level work (Cho, Kopko, Jenkins, & Jaggars, 2012). Ultimately, the initiative seeks to help more students reach their individual goals.

Achieving the Dream's student-centered model of institutional improvement is focused on creating a culture of evidence in which data and inquiry drive broad-based institutional efforts to close achievement gaps and improve student outcomes overall. The initiative is based upon the premise that to improve student success colleges need

to change the way they operate. The framework of Achieving the Dream has four

guiding principles for institutional improvement, which are outlined in Table 1.

Table 1

Achieving the Dream's Guiding Principles

Committed leadership	Senior leaders actively support efforts to improve student success and are committed to achieving equity in student outcomes.
Use of evidence to improve programs and services	College establishes processes for using data about student progression and outcomes to identify achievement gaps, formulate strategies, and evaluate the effectiveness of those strategies
Broad engagement Systemic institutional Change	Everyone shares in the responsibility for student success. College establishes planning processes that rely on data to set goals for student success and uses data to measure goal attainment.

Adapted from "Field Guide for Improving Student Success," (2009), Chapel Hill, NC: MDC, Inc.

Committed leadership has been identified as key to creating an institutional focus on

student success and is part of the top down–bottom up combination approach by

Achieving the Dream advocates. A key factor to promoting students and eliminating

achievement gaps is data. Colleges need to understand their student progression data

and evaluate the programs and services they are implementing for effectiveness.

Promoting student success cannot be the goal of a few but needs to be broadly

supported among college employees in order to create systemic institutional change.

Achieving the Dream takes the position that everyone at the college plays a part in

helping students succeed. The guiding principles outline the components needed to

create change and achieve the focus on equity and student success promoted by

Achieving the Dream. A progression of goals set by Achieving the Dream calls for

students to complete remedial work leading to success in credit-bearing courses, persist

from one semester to another, and ultimately earn a degree or certificate.

Simultaneously, a core objective of Achieving the Dream is to eliminate gaps in

achievement between traditionally underserved students and all others (Achieving the

Dream, 2007). Each college identifies student populations who currently experience

low rates of success, develops interventions to improve student outcomes, and

measures changes in student success (Morest & Jenkins, 2007). Institutions are also

required to submit longitudinal student record data on cohorts of students to document

student progression and success. Colleges participating in the Achieving the Dream

initiative are expected to advance educational equity by identifying and addressing any

achievement gaps that exist among their students, particularly for low-income students

and students of color (Achieving the Dream, 2009). Achieving the Dream is at the

forefront of national efforts to improve student outcomes in community colleges and to

hold institutions accountable for their performance.

Achieving the Dream encourages colleges to undertake the following 5-step

process to bring about changes in policy and practice that lead to improved student

success (Achieving the Dream, 2009). Figure 3 provides a visual representation of The

Achieving the Dream process for improving student success. Achieving the Dream

expects that by following these steps, colleges will be able to build a "culture of inquiry

and evidence" that will lead to continuous improvements in student success" (p. 15).

Step 1. *Commit to improving student outcomes*. The colleges' senior leadership,

with support from the board of trustees and faculty leaders, commits to making the

changes in policy and resource allocation necessary to improve student outcomes,

Improved student outcomes and reduced achievement gaps among subgroups based on five indicators:

- Completion of developmental courses and progression to credit-bearing courses
- Completion of gatekeeper courses, particularly first college-level or degree-credit courses in math and English
- Completion of attempted courses with a C or better
- Persistence from term to term and year to year
- Attainment of credentials

Figure 3. Achieving the dream's 5-step process for improving student success.
Adapted from "Field Guide for Improving Student Success," (2009), Chapel Hill, NC: MDC, Inc.

communicates the vision widely within the college, and organizes teams to oversee the process.

Step 2. *Use data to identify and prioritize problems*. The college uses longitudinal student cohort data and other evidence to identify gaps in student achievement. A key premise of Achieving the Dream is that once faculty and staff determine that certain groups of students are not doing as well as others, they will be motivated to address barriers to student success. To ensure that they utilize their resources to greatest effect, colleges are encouraged to prioritize the student achievement problems that they plan to address.

Step 3. *Engage stakeholders in developing strategies for addressing priority problems*. The college engages faculty, staff, and other internal and external stakeholders in developing strategies for remedying priority problems with student achievement, based on a diagnosis of the causes and an evaluation of the effectiveness of previous attempts by the institution and others to address similar problems.

Step 4. *Implement, evaluate, and improve strategies*. The college then implements the strategies for addressing priority problems, being sure to evaluate the outcomes and using the results to make further improvements.

Step 5: *Institutionalize effective policies and practices*. The college takes steps to institutionalize effective policies and practices. Attention is given to how resources are allocated to bring new initiatives to scale and to sustain proven strategies. The processes of program review, planning, and budgeting are driven by evidence of what works best for students.

The Achieving the Dream model and theory of change predicts that this process of institutional reform will result in improved student outcomes. Specifically, Achieving the Dream has identified the following indicators that colleges need to be monitoring and working toward improving: (a) progression from developmental to credit-bearing courses; (b) completion of "gatekeeper" courses, defined as introductory college-level courses with high student enrollments; (c) completion of all attempted courses with a grade of C or better; (d) persistence across terms; and ultimately, (e) attainment of certificates and degrees.

One of the key goals in Achieving the Dream's work is to help community colleges understand the need for working towards equity and not equality. Equity in student achievement (i.e., decreasing the achievement gaps of students of color, low-income, and first-generation students) is essential to promoting success for all students. Equity is about treating people in a way appropriate to their situation, which means taking note of what that situation might be on an individual basis. It deals with fairness rather than equality, meaning that it focuses on the elimination of intolerable gaps in status or condition between people and groups (Achieving the Dream, 2009).

According to the principles of Achieving the Dream, in order to achieve high rates of success for all students, and especially student groups that have traditionally faced the most significant barriers to success, colleges must have a student-centered vision, a culture or evidence and accountability, and a commitment to equity and excellence. By promoting student success, colleges can address an important societal problem—America's growing disparity in income and wealth. Achieving the Dream urges colleges to make a strong commitment to equity. The initiative helps colleges examine their

policies, practices, and institutional culture in relation to the goal of reducing inequities by race, ethnicity, income, and other characteristics.

As defined within Achieving the Dream (2006), "equity" does not mean treating all students the same. Instead, it means creating policies and practices that, to the extent possible offer each student the support he or she needs to succeed. Colleges are encouraged to examine three types of factors that contribute to inequity:

- *Individual behavior* is a factor when people in positions of power have biases that influence their institutions, and when individuals exhibit self-limiting behavior. For example, an instructor allowing racial or gender stereotypes influence their level of engagement and interaction with their students or making assumptions about student behavior without understanding student's culture or background.

- *Institutional practice*s are a factor when institutions are not consciously dedicated to promoting equity, or when they are unaware of unintended negative consequences of their policies and practices. For example, offering a college course schedule that is incompatible with the local bus schedule. When the local bus is the main source of transportation for low-income students, having the course schedule and bus schedule align aids these students in being on time for class, staying the class period, and making it to work after class.

- *Structural factors* arise from the interplay of cultural values, national beliefs, and public policies. For example, popular culture and the media can influence judgments about who deserves privilege through word choices and selected images that are used to describe racial and ethnic groups. Similarly, national values and beliefs about personal responsibility, meritocracy, and equal

opportunity influence personal and institutional behavior. Public policies may

work against equity deliberately or inadvertently (Achieving the Dream, 2006,

p. 7).

To promote success for all students, the data-driven analysis advocated by the

initiative allows colleges to identify the achievement gaps of their students.

Achievement gaps are frequently symptoms of structural inequities that need to be

assessed and addressed at an institutional level, not an individual level, in order to work

toward equity and achieve student success. Structural inequity provides a necessary

lens for identifying the institutional and systemic barriers that impede student success.

Thirty-eight percent of White students who began at a community college earned a

degree or certificate within 6 years versus 26 percent of African Americans and 29

percent of Hispanics (Price, 2004). Low-income students and students of color

overwhelmingly attend secondary schools with significantly fewer resources than

predominantly White students who attend suburban schools (Price, 2004). Twenty

percent of high school graduates from families with incomes less than $25,000 was

highly prepared for college, compared to more than 50 percent of high school graduates

from incomes greater than $75,000 (NCES, 2000). Among high school graduates, 77

percent of high-income students enroll in college immediately after high school versus

50 percent of students from low-income families (Price, 2004). In a global economy,

employability is contingent on educational level. The nation's economy will depend on

the effectiveness of the higher education system to educate individuals from under-

represented groups (Vernez & Mizell, 2001). By 2015, 48 percent of Latinos and 18

percent of African Americans will enter a labor sector where job growth will be primarily

concentrated among managerial, professional, technical, health care, and educational professions, all of which require postsecondary training (Carnevale, 1999).

The variation in degree attainment across different subgroups of students (e.g., low-income, students of color, and first-generation college students) highlights the need to develop, implement, and evaluate services to identify effective practices so all students can be successful. Achieving the Dream aims to help colleges adopt an evidence-based process for decision making and resource allocation. This initiative serves colleges in helping them evaluate progress each year, set new goals for the coming year, and allocate resources based on evidence about how well various policies and programs will help the college toward its goals. Evidence-based, student-centered, and built on the values of equity and excellence, Achieving the Dream is closing achievement gaps and accelerating student success nationwide. This research explores how community colleges are working toward equity in their student outcomes through Achieving the Dream. It is imperative that community colleges serve as agents of equity. These institutions are public institutions designed to democratize the opportunity and access to higher education.

Key Terminology

The following definitions are offered to help guide and inform the reader. They are not intended to be definitive but are provided as a representative source of terms.

Achievement gaps: Refers to the observed disparity on a number of educational measures between the performance of student groups (low-income, first-generation, and students of color). The achievement gap shows up in grades, standardized-test

scores, course selection, dropout rates, and college-completion rates, among other success measures (McCall, Hauser, Cronin, Kingsbury, & Houser, 2006).

Achieving the Dream cohorts: All degree/certificate seeking undergraduate students (full and part-time) who entered the college for the first time during the 2003 fall quarter (2003 Cohort), the 2004 fall quarter (2004 Cohort), and the 2005 fall quarter (2005 cohort) etc. (Achieving the Dream, 2006)

Credentials: Certificates or degrees awarded by an institution of higher education.

Credit bearing courses: Classes that count toward a certificate or degree program at an institution of higher education.

Culture of evidence: The process of gathering, analyzing, and using data to transform institutional policies and practices. Data driven decision-making process designed to help more students succeed (Achieving the Dream, 2009).

Developmental education: Consists of courses that are at the precollege level. "Educational courses that are developed to help students gain the skills necessary to be college ready or proficient for college level courses" (Bailey, Jeong, & Cho, 2009, p. 1).

Equality: Treating all students the same, providing the same opportunities to all students regardless of need.

Equity: Does not mean treating all students are the same. It means creating policies and practices that—to the extent possible—offer each student the support he or she needs to succeed (Achieving the Dream, 2006).

First-generation college student: A student whose parents or guardians have not earned a 4-year college degree (Davis, 2010).

Gatekeeper courses: High-enrollment, introductory courses, which are also often characterized by high fail and withdrawal rates. Many gatekeeper courses are prerequisites to other courses required by within a program of study. If students are unable to pass a course, they are blocked from continuing towards their degree.

Learning college: An institution whose policies, procedures, and practices are designed to make enhanced student learning the first priority (O'Banion, 1997).

Open access policy: An administrative policy of accepting everyone who has a high school diploma or general educational development (GED) and completes an admissions application to attend the community college (AACC, 2004).

Organizational justice: Individuals' perceptions of fairness in their workplace (Greenberg & Colquitt, 2005).

Persistence: Student enrollment in college in succeeding semesters (fall to spring, spring to fall, etc.) (Achieving the Dream, 2009).

Retention: The ability of an educational institution to keep a student until the student earns his or her degree (Tinto, 1993).

Round 1: The initial 26 colleges to join the Achieving the Dream initiative in 2004. These colleges include: Alamo Community College District, Brookhaven College, Broward College, Central New Mexico Community College, Coastal Bend College, Danville Community College, Durham Technical Community College, El Paso Community College, Galveston College, Guilford Technical Community College, Hillsborough Community College, Houston Community College System, Martin Community College, Mountain Empire Community College, Patrick Henry Community College, Paul D. Camp Community College, Santa Fe Community College, South Texas

College, Southwest Texas Junior College, Southwestern Indian Polytechnic Institute, St. Philips College, Tallahassee Community College, Tidewater Community College University of New Mexico–Gallup Campus, Valencia College, and Wayne Community College (Achieving the Dream, 2006).

Student success: "Student attainment of academic and personal goals" (Seidman, 2005, p. 21).

Overview of Chapters

Each chapter contributes to the goal of the examining the efforts of community colleges, as public institutions, to promote equity and eliminate achievement gaps for low-income, first generation, and students of color. Chapter 1 provides an introduction to the study, its purpose, and an overview of Achieving the Dream. Chapter 2 provides a discussion of the theoretical framework used to guide the analysis of this study. This includes an examination of core dimensions of structural inequity and organization justice within the community college context. Chapter 3 presents the details of the qualitative methodology and outlines the application of the theoretical framework in the coding and analysis of the in-depth interview data. Chapter 4 presents the findings discussed by theme. Finally Chapter 5 offers recommendations and conclusions.

CHAPTER 2. LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Matters of fairness and equity are the core of the American public ethos. – H. George
Frederickson

This chapter establishes the theoretical context for community colleges to
promote social equity and eliminate educational achievement gaps within in their
student outcomes. It begins by introducing the concept of implementation research and
its utility in understanding program effects and establishing the importance of
understanding structural inequities and how they inhibit opportunity and perpetuate
achievement gaps for low-income, first-generation, and students of color within
community colleges. A discussion of structural inequity and organizational justice
frames the institutional responsibility of public organizations to address structural
inequities. The theoretical framework for this research is established by social equity
within the field of public administration and will be used to explore the community
colleges role as public institutions in promoting justice and fair inclusion. Following the
discussion of social equity and implementation of social equity, this chapter addresses
educational equity and its importance to educational institutions and society-at-large.
Finally, the community college setting is addressed, including the historical context,
mission, evaluation of the characteristics of community college students and their
importance in addressing inequities and achievement gaps in the higher education
system.

Policy Implementation

Implementation studies are recommended to assess the feasibility and effectiveness in real-life of programs and helps us to learn not only "did it work?" but "what worked?" (Van Meter & Van Horn, 1975). Implementation is defined as a specified set of activities designed to put into practice an activity or program of known dimensions (Brock, 2003). Implementation is concerned with what happens to a policy or program after it has been formulated (Pressman & Wildavsky, 1973). According to this definition, implementation processes are purposeful and are described in sufficient detail such that independent observers can detect the presence and strength of the "specific set of activities" related to implementation. Petersilia (1990) concluded that, "the ideas embodied in innovative social programs are not self-executing" (p. 129).

Scholars have offered numerous explanations for how policy is implemented that focus on the nature of social problems, the design of policy, the governance system and organizational arrangements in which policy must operate, and the will or capacity of the people charged with implementing policy. Pressman and Wildavsky's (1973) seminal work used a federal job creation program in Oakland, CA, to distinguish between design failures and the implementing agencies. Their analysis furthered public administration literature in three key ways: "Expressed explicit concern with evaluation and political behavior in addressing the extent to which policy objectives were achieved; provided a focus on complex interactions between multiple actors; analyzed casual assumptions implicit in achieving policy goals" (Mazmanian & Sabatier, 1989, p. 5).

Mazmanian and Sabatier (1989) expanded on the work of Pressman and Wildavsky (1973) to provide a comprehensive definition of implementation:

Implementation is the carrying out of a basic policy decision, usually incorporated in a statute but which can also take the form of important executive orders or court decisions. Ideally, that decision identifies the problem[s] to be: addressed, stipulates the objectives[s] to be pursued and, in a variety of ways, 'structures' the implementation process. The process normally runs through a number of stages beginning with the passage of the basic statute, followed by the policy outputs [decisions] of the implementing agencies, the compliance target groups with those decisions, the actual impacts—both intended and unintended—of those outputs, the perceived impacts of agency decisions, and, finally, important revisions [or attempted revisions] in the basic statute. (p. 20)

Hasenfeld and Brock (1991) examined 37 implementation studies and attempted to categorize them by policy type (top-down/bottom-up/iterative), by explanatory driving forces to the implementation process, and across a number of units of analysis (actors, policy instruments, and inter/intraorganizational networks). Top-down policies referred to those that are directed by statute and a process created to attain the policy objectives and goals (Mazmanian & Sabatier, 1989, cited in Hasenfeld & Brock 1991; Van Horn & Van Meter, 1977), while bottom-up policies characterized policy implementation as being shaped by the implementers at the point of practice or impact (Berman & McLaughlin, 1976, cited in Hasenfeld & Brock, 1991; Mazmanian and Sabatier 1989; Weatherly & Lipsky, 1977). Iterative policies are those conceptualized as a combination of the two and are more evolutionary (Majone & Wildavsky 1978). Driving forces were the explanations offered for the observed patterns of implementation contained within the studies. These were defined as the pursuit of rationality, organization-policy fit, bureaucratic discretion and adaptation, power relations, and leadership and competence. The purpose of dividing prior studies into these driving force domains was to provide a framework for a synthetic model to explain the implementation of a variety of social policies (Hasenfeld & Brock, 1991).

Implementation research can help develop policy, design interventions and programs, identify problems and barriers to implementation, scale up or sustainability, develop solutions to problems, and help improve and evaluate quality, access, utilization, efficiency, and impact (Brock, 2003). This study was designed to understand what Round 1 community colleges were able to accomplish utilizing the Achieving the Dream Model to pursue student success and equity through a culture of evidence. To explore "how" community colleges implement policies, programs, and interventions to promote equity in student success outcomes.

Structural Inequity

Structural inequity is the interplay of cultural, national, and individual values, policies and practices that causes society to allocate opportunity and support in ways that give unfair advantages to certain groups of people. Structural inequity is hard to recognize, but it refers to the ways society is organized, intentionally or not, to give an advantage to one group over another (Dodson, 2007). Cultural values and institutional policies together influence individual opportunities, behaviors, and attitudes about the allocation of opportunity and advantage. Figure 4 provides a visual representation of structural inequity. Structural inequity provides an umbrella to discuss disparities related to race and social economic status.

American society believes in the power of individual effort and personal responsibility as engines of advancement (Frederickson, 2005). When people "fall short," Americans are more likely to attribute those shortcomings to a person's individual failure than to institutional behaviors and public policies that are inconsistent with our national and cultural values. This attribution is often unfair, as cultural values
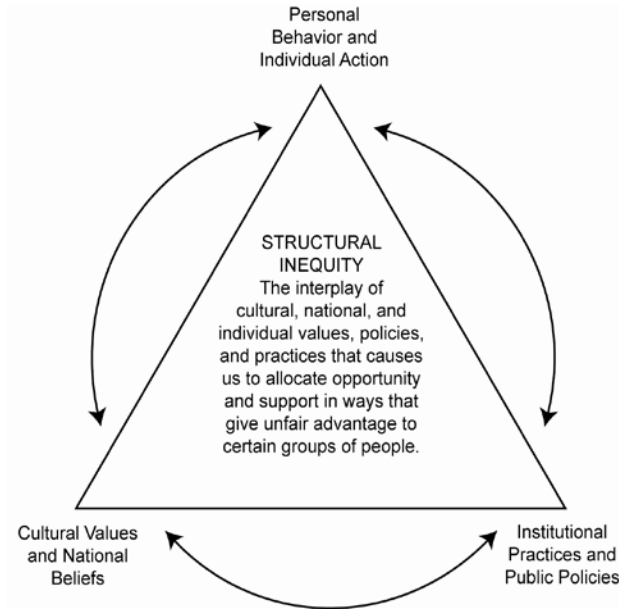
Figure 4. Structural inequity.
Adapted from "Increasing Student Success at Community Colleges: Institutional Change in Achieving the Dream, 2007, Achieving the Dream Community Colleges Count.

and institutional policies influence individual opportunities, behaviors, and attitudes about the allocation of opportunity. The American misconception that individual effort and personal responsibility are singular engines of advancement demonstrates that institutions need to change their ways of thinking in regard to personal responsibility, meritocracy, and equal opportunity (Dodson, 2007).

Individualism is deeply entrenched in symbols and metaphors that frame society. This frame denies the existence of privilege and promotes a flawed concept of fairness as something deserved and earned, while creating the idea that hard work will automatically lead to success. The idea of "equal opportunity" further perpetuates the structural unfairness and allows the disadvantages to remain. Possession of social, cultural, and economic capital often blinds individuals to their own structural advantages and the unfairness of others (DiTomaso, Parks-Yancy, & Post, 2003).

The ideals of equality and justice are great themes in the culture of American public life. From the Declaration of Independence to the pledge of allegiance, the rhetoric of equality permeates our symbols of nationhood. Over and over in our history, from the earliest colonial beginnings, equality has been a rallying cry, a promise, and an article of national faith, and we have strived to move closer to achieving the goal of justice for all. At the same time, the nation's history is replete with inequality and injustice supported by tradition, law, and practice. (Frederickson, 1990; Standing Panel on Social Equity in Governance, 2005)

Equality and justice are powerful and motivating, but society also applies them unevenly. The causes of social inequality do not lie only in personal behavior. Cultural values and public policies can work for and against fairness or equity when they allocate advantage and opportunity unevenly (Kane, 1999). Opportunity gaps in educational attainment, economic well-being, and health outcomes all are perpetuated by systemic structures. For example, those with baccalaureate degrees enjoy a 30 percent to 40 percent advantage in yearly income over high school graduates, and a 15 percent to 20 percent income advantage over those with associate degrees (Kienzl, 2004). However, among high school graduates, 77 percent of high-income students enroll in college immediately after high school versus 50 percent of students from low-income families (Price, 2004). Another example of structural inequity can be found within public transportation policies that facilitate the movement of workers from suburbs to the center city. Today many low-income and working low-income live in center cities and work in suburbs, but public investment and subsidy does not facilitate their commuting (Dodson, 2007). Finally, in 1935 Social Security was designed to benefit the great

White majority, but domestic and migrant agricultural workers (mostly people of color) could not qualify for it until the 1950s. These groups lost out on a generation of support for building financial security for their old age and dependents (Dodson, 2007).

Caplan and Nelson (1973) suggest that it is the "structural inequities within society's institutional structures and not so much personal traits that account for the fact that some students succeed better than others" (p. 200). These structural inequities within college campuses, including the lack of minority faculty, the use of primarily monocultural curricula, invalidating views of underserved students, and placement of people of color in limited power positions, perpetuate the lack of success for low-income and students of color. Achievement gaps are frequently opportunity gaps created by systems that disparage groups based upon their race, class, or privilege.

For colleges to have a student-centered vision and promote student success requires the commitment to explore achievement gaps from a multitude of perspectives, including the influence of race, class, and power. In order to work towards equity, community colleges need to be aware of the structural inequities that exist for their students as a result of institutional policies, practices, societal norms, and assumptions. These are not solely personal barriers but also systemic barriers. Using a structural inequity lens allows colleges to see the systemic barriers their students face. Challenges previously characterized as individually caused are now examined from a structural and systemic perspective. Community colleges need to heighten their awareness of the problems associated with structural inequities within their campuses in order to create more equitable conditions for all students. For community colleges to dismantle structural inequities, they must be conscious of race, gender, class, and

power biases. Many structural factors related to race, gender, class, and power are influenced by an organization's overall perception of justice.

Organizational Justice

Organizational justice is a specific extension of the concept of justice. Justice—a term that often is interchangeably used with fairness by social scientists—is a core value in American society (Greenberg & Colquitt, 2005). Philosopher John Rawls (1971) referred to justice as the first virtue of social organizations. It is a fundamental concern in all social interactions. Everyone wants to be treated fairly, and with dignity and respect, in all spheres of social life. Therefore, justice operates as a binding force in society. Organizational justice is important to the field of public administration. It guides both an organization's external and internal actions.

Organizational justice generally is conceptualized in terms of individuals' perceptions of fairness in their workplace (Greenberg & Colquitt, 2005). It is defined as the study of the role of fairness as a consideration in the workplace (Greenberg, 1990). Justice is a particularly important issue in organizations because it is a guiding principle for cooperative social actions in the workplace (Barnard, 1938). Employees care deeply about how they are treated in their workplaces, and their perceptions of organizational justice may largely influence the nature of their relationship with and feelings about their organizations (Folger & Cropanzano, 1998).

Organizational justice is a multidimensional construct (Colquitt, 2001). Perceptions of organizational justice include judgments about equity in the allocation of organizational rewards and resources (Adams, 1963, 1965; Homans, 1958, 1961), fairness in formal policies and procedures used in allocating those rewards and

resources (Leventhal, 1980; Lind & Tyler, 1988), and the quality of interpersonal treatment that individuals receive from authorities during the implementation of those procedures (Bies, 2001; Bies & Moag, 1986). These three facets of fairness in organizations are termed distributive, procedural, and interactional justice, respectively (Bies, 2001; Colquitt, 2001; Greenberg, 1993a, 1993b).

Organizational justice has received considerable attention in recent years from researchers because of its proximal association with a variety of important work attitudes and behaviors (Colquitt, Greenberg, & Zapata-Phelan, 2005). Two meta-analyses (Cohen-Charash & Spector, 2001; Colquitt, Conlon, Wesson, Porter, & Ng, 2001) found that perceptions of organizational justice have a strong association with employees' job satisfaction, pay satisfaction, organizational commitment, trust in supervisor and management, evaluation of organizational authorities, turnover intention, withdrawal behavior, job performance, and organizational citizenship behaviors. Additionally, scholars continue to pay close attention to organizational justice because it provides a useful lens to study a variety of important management issues in organizations. Theories of organizational justice have been applied to study employees' reactions about participation initiatives, dispute resolution programs, performance evaluation methods, compensation systems, employee selection processes, training implementation programs, and organizational merger and change (Colquitt, Greenberg, & Scott, 2005).

The study of organizational justice is critical for the field of public administration (Rubin, 2009). Justice serves a normative function in government agencies by providing legitimacy to decisions made by government authorities. Organizational

justice research has shown that organizations and leaders perceived as being fair elicit loyalty, commitment, and trust from their employees. Individuals in these organizations are also more likely to engage in voluntary effort extending beyond regular job duties (Cobb, Folger, & Wooten, 1995). Employees in these organizations are more committed to the mission of their organizations, on board with organizational change and improvement, and accountable (Cropanzano & Schminke, 2001).

Although most of the scholarship related to organizational justice focuses within the organization and the relationship between the organization and its employees, it has important application in understanding organizational change and mission commitment. In order for community colleges to fulfill their missions and embrace a culture of equity, these institutions need to be perceived by their employees *and their students* as just. Community colleges are under constant pressure to increase participatory governance and gather data for accountability and accreditation. According to climate surveys conducted within community colleges, an atmosphere of participatory governance is key to creating trust, buy-in, and commitment to do more with less resources amongst employees (Sullivan, Reichard, Shumate, 2005). Embracing a culture of equity requires institutional change. Both faculty and staff want to have a voice in that change. Community colleges embracing principles of organizational justice increases employee commitment and buy-in in times of change and transition (Folger & Cropanzano, 1998).

Social Equity: A Theoretical Application of Justice in Public Administration

This research focuses on the access and outcomes dimensions of social equity. Community colleges are public organizations that provide open access to higher education and workforce training. However, achievement gaps exist in educational

outcomes of community colleges. Low-income, first generation, and students of color are not progressing or completing at the same rate. To implement social equity, it is important for community colleges to respond to outcome disparities on an institutional level by committing to the goal of equity. Social equity provides both the theoretical and analytical framework for this study. The utilization of social equity allows for the assessment of the public good provided by community colleges and to determine their ability to serve as democratic agents of opportunity in terms of access and outcomes.

Social Equity Origins

The foundation of social equity in public administration can be traced to classic essays of Woodrow Wilson who indicated that it is the role of public administrators to implement the law with enlightenment and equity (Johnson & Svara, 2011). Social equity challenges the idea that "good administration of government was equally good for everyone" (Frederickson, 2010). Social equity is essential to support the democratic process (Johnson & Svara, 2011). The philosophical underpinnings of social equity are found in John Rawls' seminal work *Theory of Justice* (1971). Rawls (1971) studied the distribution of primary social goods such as rights, liberties, opportunities, powers, income, and wealth.

The three components of Rawlsian justice theory include: the "veil of ignorance", "fraternity among all men" and "noblesse oblige." Rawls theorized that best approach to combating inequities inherent in a society where social goods are distributed according to natural endowment, was to place the more talented citizens behind a veil of ignorance, depriving them of information on the individuating characteristics of the citizens they are making decisions about. Rawls posited that if people were unaware of

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the talents and abilities, ethnicity, gender, religion or belief system of the citizen, they would be forced to operate in the absence of bias. The veil of ignorance would result in a society where the rights and the needs of every member of society would be respected (Nagel, 2003). The fraternity among all men refers to the trust and acceptance that our fates are intertwined. The noblesse oblige is the moral duty of the advantaged to share their resources and promote the condition of the disadvantaged (Rawls, 1971).

Rawls operationalizes his theory through two principles of justice. Rawls explains the principles by writing:

> The first principle is to have an equal right to the most extensive total system of equal basic liberties compatible with a similar system of liberty for all. The second principle is that social and economic inequalities are to be arranged so that they are both: (a) to the greatest benefit to the least advantaged consistent with the just savings principle, and (b) attached to offices and positions open to all under conditions of fair equality and opportunity. (Rawls, 1971, p.135)

The principles are designed to instruct those who administer society and ensure the rights of all individuals are protected. David Hart (1974) defines the linkage of Rawls' theory of justice and the public administrator's approach to social equity (p 9-10):

> Acceptance of the theory of justice would provide the equitable public administrator with clear, well-developed ethical guidelines, which would give social equity the force that it now lacks.
> The theory of justice could provide the necessary ethical consensus that the equitable that the equitable public administrator has both the duty and the obligation to deploy his efforts on behalf of the less advantaged.
> The theory of justice would impose constraints upon all complex public organizations since no organization would be allowed to infringe upon the basic liberties of individuals.
> The theory of justice would provide a professional code for public administration that would require a commitment to social equity. (Hart, 1974, p 9-10)

Hart (1974) clearly outlines the benefit that social equity achieves in both definition and application from Rawls' work.

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Social equity relative to public administration theory and practice is more commonly linked to social equity literature and "new public administration" (Rohr, 1989, p. 64). New public administration is a stream of thought that emerged from the turbulent 1960s and the first Minnowbrook (1968) conference. As H. George Frederickson (2005) notes, "It was during the 1960s that it became increasingly evident that the results of governmental policy and the work of public administrators implementing those policies were much better for some citizens than for others" (p. 11). Social equity is the foundation of good governance and was born out of the turmoil of injustice of the era.

The origin of social equity within public administration is attributed to Minnowbrook I, held in 1968 at Minnowbrook, a conference center of Syracuse University. The conference marked the beginning of the "new public administration," which placed more emphasis on the normative approach, in contrast to the traditional perception that public administration should be "value neutral." New public administration sought to reconcile the field of public administration with democracy, promote relevance, encourage client-centered bureaucracy, and strive for social equity in solving problems (Marini, 1971). Dwight Waldo, a scholar at the Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs at Syracuse University, thought the field of public administration needed to respond to current events of the day—social unrest. He was concerned that the field of public administration was becoming overly consumed with efficiency and effectiveness at the expense of democratic values. Dwight Waldo gathered young scholars, strictly under age 35, to "redefine the focus of public administration theory." Young scholars, H. George Frederickson, Frank Marini, and William Lambright helped Dwight Waldo organize Minnowbrook I.

The Minnowbrook conference became an academic tradition that takes place every 20 years to reflect and define the future trajectory or topics of importance within the field of public administration. Social equity has been one of the topics of focus for all three Minnowbrook conferences (1968, 1988, 2008). Social equity returned the focus of public administration to the central value in American culture—equality and is "now, more than ever, more than ever, is the time for a renewed focus on social equity in both the practice and study of public administration" (Gooden & Portillo, 2011, p i63).

Defining Social Equity

The concept or value of social equity is one that permeates society, government, and the field of public administration. Social equity is simultaneously one of the most simple and most abstract notions (Rae & Yates, 1981). "Social equity is a commitment to attack disparity and advance equality for persons in groups that have been [or in the future might be] subject to treatment that is inferior, prejudicial or hostile" (Johnson & Svara, 2011, p. 281). Social equity was established as the fourth pillar of public administration by the Standing Panel of Social Equity, National Academy of Public Administration (NAPA). The other pillars of public administration include efficiency, effectiveness, and economy. All together the pillars are referred to as the 4 E's. Each of these pillars make up the theoretical foundation of public administration and outline principles of good governance. Social equity offers a linkage between theory and values within the field of public administration (Frederickson, 2010). NAPA created the Standing Panel of Social Equity. The panel was charged with being the voice of equity within the field (Frederickson, 2010). NAPA's Standing Panel on Social Equity in Governance (2000) defines social equity as:

The fair, just and equitable management of all institutions serving the public directly or by contract, and the fair, just and equitable distribution of public service and implementation of public policy and the commitment to promote fairness, justice, and equity in the formation of public policy. (Standing Panel of Social Equity in Governance, 2000)

"This definition clarified what is meant by equity, but the NAPA panel has faced the challenge of specifying more precisely what equity is and how it is possible to systematically examine when and how equity is being achieved" (Svara & Brunet, 2004, p. 101).

There is still ongoing debate on how to best operationalize social equity. Social equity is an easily accepted ethos but not easily operationalized in practice. Commenting on John Rawls', *A Theory of Justice*, Svara and Brunet (2004, p.101), state, "To achieve fairness, the first principle is that each person is guaranteed equal basic liberties consistent with an extensive system of liberty for all." The second principle, the difference principle, requires social and economic inequalities to be managed so that they are of greatest benefit to the least advantaged. Unequal treatment should be intended to promote a fairer distribution of resources in society by benefiting those who are disadvantaged most. Svara and Brunet (2004) outline the ongoing difficulty in the multiple meanings and ways of measuring social equity. They define four areas of social equity within public administration: procedural fairness, access, quality, and outcomes: *procedural fairness* under which due process, equal protection, hiring, promotion, awarding of contracts are all guaranteed; *access or distributional equity*, which assures equal access, targeted intervention, and commitment of resources to achieve fair results; *quality or process equity* that guarantees consistency in the level of service delivery regardless of distributional

criteria used, and *outcomes* that probe reasons why disparities may still exist as a result

of policies and programs that may in fact meet all input criteria (Svara & Brunet, 2004).

Guy and McCandless (2012) expand on the work of Svara and Brunet (2004) with their

comprehensive definition of social equity as:

> (1) procedural fairness, meaning due process, equal protections and civil rights;
> (2) equity in the availability of services and benefits; (3) equity in the process of
> providing services and benefits; (4) equal level of outcomes for all groups; and
> (5) a guarantee of a place at the table to express views on policy choices and
> service delivery. (p. 512)

Although there is an array of definitions regarding what constitutes social equity

(Frederickson 1990), the fundamental principle associated with each conception

recognizes that each citizen, regardless of socioeconomic status or demographic

characteristics, should be given fair treatment by organizations and the broader political

system (Shafritz, Russell, & Borick, 2011). Gooden (2008) states that the national

promotion of social equity is the cornerstone of living in a democratic society.

Social equity has been an enduring and significant theme in public administration

for over 40 years. Viewed collectively, social equity can thus be construed as the

democratic constitutional values of fairness, justice, equal opportunity, and equality

(Rosenbloom, 1977). It embodies host of concepts, legal tools, and public policies

(Riccucci, 2009). According to NAPA (n.d.), issues of fairness, justice, and equity have

always been a part of public administration, and these issues were front-and-center in

the early years of affirmative action. Now the focus has moved from hiring and

promotion practices and contractor selection, to fields as broad as education, policing,

welfare, housing, and transportation. In the language of public administration, the

phrase "social equity" has come to be the way we bring these issues together and apply

them to the field (p.1). Social equity scholarship has been explored from multiple dimensions. At the core of all social equity scholarship is the need for equity whether it be public administration academic and practitioner communities to continue working towards assuring a fair distribution of benefits and burdens among members of society (Frederickson, 1989; Guy, 1989; Ingraham & Rosenbloom, 1989); the importance of equity considerations in public law, policy formulation and implementation, service delivery, management activities, public administration research, and public administration practice (Coates, 2001; Cooper, 2000; Denhardt & Denhardt, 2000; Frederickson, 1996; Kakabadse, Kakabadse, & Kouzmin, 2003; Kelly, 1998; Musso, 1999; Nye, 1999; Terry, 1998; Waldo, 1980; Wamsley et al., 1989); the inclusion of social equity as key component of the master's of public administration curriculum; the need to formally adopt social equity into the Network of Schools of Public Policy, Affairs, and Administration (NASPAA) required curriculum, filling in the skeletal pillar of social equity both from an instruction and scholarship perspective; the information and tools that public administrators to be equitable (Gooden & Myers, 2004; Svara & Brunet, 2004; Spriggs, 2004; and Rice, 2004), the practice of social equity in public organizations (Johnson, 2011; Norman-Major, 2011), the measurement of social equity and the future of social equity (Johnson & Svara, 2011; Wooldridge & Gooden, 2009). Social equity scholarship and practice have a lot of work remaining.

The scholarship on social equity focuses on defining the concept, identifying the inequities that exist and limited scholarship on how social equity is done. Gooden (2008) discusses the lack of fire that exists in the field. In order for social equity to go beyond a value or theoretical lens there needs to be more research on the *practice* of

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social equity. Gooden (2008, 2010) provides a call for action for social equity research—to break the cycle of ready, aim, study more. Gooden (2011) explores how social equity research can inform the practice of social equity and be an agent for change and progress in reversing social inequities. Gooden (2011) outlines a process for increasing the forward momentum of social equity. In Table 2, Gooden's 3-step process of ready, aim, and fire are defined and used as framework to analyze progress of Round 1 community colleges within Achieving the Dream. The first step is for the organization to the evidence that inequities exist. Next the organization facilitates acceptance of the data and creates a plan to address the inequities, followed by implementation of the plan to address the inequities. It is not enough to identify the inequities and potential solutions without a means of implementation.

Table 2

Creating More Fire—Community Colleges and Social Equity

Gooden's Process for More Fire in Social Equity	
Step 1 *Ready*: Solid data - social inequities exist	Achievement gaps in educational outcomes by race and socioeconomic status are identified.
Step 2 *Aim*: Acceptance of research and concrete plan to reverse identified inequities	Community colleges participating in Achieving the Dream. Creating a culture of evidence to determine areas for intervention, creating intervention to address barriers to student success and promote equity.
Step 3 *Fire*: Equity plan must be successfully implemented	Colleges are implementing equity measures and interventions.
Step 4 *Replication/Sustainability*: Process for eliminating inequities and achievement gaps needs to be documented, shared and replicated by other institutions.	

Adapted from "The Politics of Ready, Aim, Study More," by S. T. Gooden, 2008, *Journal of Race and Policy, 4,* 7–21.

Johnson and Svara (2011) indicate that public administrators need to be committed to the "basic social equity measures of access, fairness, quality, and

continue to seek new ways to achieve them and outlines a number of social equity imperatives for public administrators to consider" (p 284). As long as one's lot in life can be predicted by their group membership (race, ethnicity, gender, socioeconomic status, sexual orientation) the pursuit of social equity is not over. Social equity embodies the goal that the members of all social groups will have the same prospects for success and the same opportunity to be protected from adversities of life. The United States faces critical issues in the fair, just, and equitable formation and implementation of public policy, distribution of public services, and management of the organizations that do the work of public (Johnson & Svara, 2011). The Standing Panel of Social Equity in Governance issued a call to action (2005) for an increased commitment to advancing social equity. Included in the call to action was the need to address disparities and achievement gaps in higher education. This research addressed the role of one public institution of higher learning: community colleges. The purpose of this research was to explore the opportunity to promote social equity through student success at community colleges.

<div align="center">**Educational Equity**</div>

In the American public education system, educational achievement is linked to social groupings such as race, ethnicity, class, and gender (Ball, Hoover, Lewis, Bass, & Wall, 2003). Research over the last 30 years has pointed to a variety of causes of inequities in achievement including cultural, economic, political, and for the failure of the American public education system to educate low-income and students of color (Reyes & Stanic, 1988; Secada, 1988, 1992). According to Scheurich and Skrla (2003), "the success of our society will soon be directly dependent on our ability as educators to be

<div align="center">51</div>

successful with children of color, with whom we have not been very successful in the past" (p. 5).

Noguera and Wing (2006) argue that educational inequity clearly demonstrates our nation's unfulfilled commitment to equality and justice for all. Numerous studies have shown that educational equity includes a number of important components. Skrla, Scheurich, Johnson, and Koschoreck (2001) argue that increased accountability would not be effective without a focus on eliminating systemic inequities. Addressing educational equity is critical to eliminating the racial and socioeconomic achievement gap (Berlak, 2001; Lee, 2004; Jencks & Phillips, 1998; Ogbu, 2003; Viadero, 2006). Inequities that exist within our educational system negatively impact the learning experiences of low-income and students of color.

Singleton and Linton (2006) define educational equity as "raising the achievement of all students, while narrowing the gap between the highest and lowest performing students; eliminating the racial predictability, and disproportionality of which student groups occupy the highest and lowest achievement categories" (p. 46). Thus ensuring, that all students receive the individual support they need to reach and exceed the common standard. Scheurich and Skrla (2003) explain that educational equity is linked with excellence where educational equity means all students achieve high levels of academic success and there are no persistent patterns of differences in academic success by race ethnicity or any other factors (p. 2). The Equity Assistance Center at Education Northwest (2014) defines educational equity as the elimination of discrimination in educational institutions, programs, and curricula on the basis of race,

national origin, or sex and of those elements of role stereotyping and role socialization that prevent full and fair participation by all student in educational programs.

Addressing the inequities within the American educational system takes leadership. Leaders cannot and should not accept inequitable achievement as a given (Scheurich, Skrla, & Johnson, 2000), especially for students who face multiple forms of oppression and marginalization in the existing educational system (Gerwirtz, 2006). Lopez, Magdaleno, and Reis (2006) define leadership for equity as bold, courageous actions that eliminate inequities and reduce the achievement gap. Scheurich and Skrla (2003) identify essential characteristics of leadership for equity and excellence: (a) a strong ethical or moral core focused on equity and excellence, (b) a belief that improvement in equity and excellence is possible, and (c) never quitting in the insistence on working towards equity and excellence (p. 143). In addition, Scheurich and Skrla (2003) also argue that data need to be analyzed by specific student groups, so that an overall data picture does not hide low subgroup performance of any one group. In 2004, Skrla, Scheurich, Garcia, and Nolly again assert that the use of data is essential to address inequities shown when data are disaggregated.

The focus of educational equity and accountability began within K-12. However, educational equity is important throughout the educational pipeline. There is an increased focus on the issue of educational equity within our higher education system, as our knowledge-based economy requires postsecondary education or training. Although the demands for an educated workforce have increased, only 60 percent of high school graduates go on to college and only about half of them graduate from college with a degree. In the end, less than 30 percent of an age cohort in the United

States gains a college degree (U.S. Census Bureau, 2005). For low-income and students of color, the pipeline leaks more profusely at every juncture. A democracy that will survive and thrive in a world that demands a well-educated citizenry must build a system that can ensure all students the right to learn.

Figure 5 illustrates the earnings of full-time workers ages 25 and over by education level and gender in 2007. For both sexes and all races/ethnicities, higher median earnings were associated with higher educational attainment. For example, those with at least a bachelor's degree had a median income of $58,900, while those who had completed high school had a median income of $32,000. The data demonstrate the equity gap that exists in earning by race and gender. Hispanic and Black males and females earn less on average than their White and Asian counterparts.
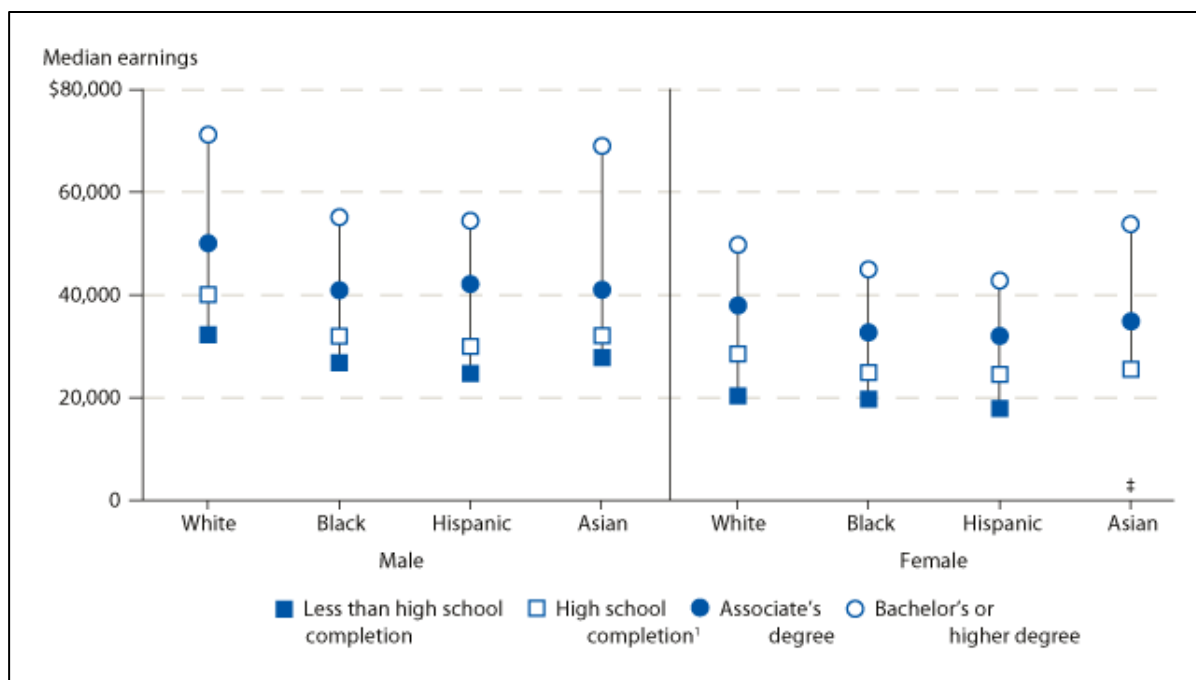
Figure 5. Median earnings by race, gender, and educational attainment.
Adapted from "Annual Social and Economic Supplement," Current Population Survey (CPS), 2008, U.S. Department of Commerce, Census Bureau

Males generally had higher median incomes than females for each race/ethnicity and at each educational level, although the income gaps varied in size. For example, White males with at least a bachelor's degree out-earned their female peers by $21,000. At the same level of educational attainment, Black males out-earned their female peers by $10,000. Among males, Asians and Whites had higher median incomes ($52,000 and $50,000, respectively) than males of other racial/ethnic groups, except Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander males. Hispanic males had a lower median income ($33,000) than Black males ($38,000), American Indian/Alaska Native males ($39,000), Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander males ($45,000), and males of two or more races ($45,000). At all levels of educational attainment, other than doctorate/first-professional, the median income for Black males was lower than the median income for White males. Similarly, at each level of educational attainment, other than master's, the median income for Hispanic males was lower than the income for White males. Additionally, the median income of Asian males with at least a bachelor's degree was higher than that of Black males and Hispanic males with the same level of educational attainment. Among those with at least a bachelor's degree, the median income was $71,000 for White males and $69,000 for Asian males, compared with $55,000 for Black males and $54,000 for Hispanic males.

Asians females had a higher median income ($42,000) than females of other racial/ethnic groups, except Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islanders. In addition, White females and females of two or more races had higher median incomes ($38,000 and $35,000, respectively) than Black ($31,000) and Hispanic ($30,000) females. White females who had completed high school, some college, or an associate's degree

had a higher median income than Black and Hispanic females with similar educational attainment. Asian females with at least a bachelor's degree had higher median earnings ($54,000) compared to White females ($50,000), Black females ($45,000), and Hispanic females ($43,000). As seen in Figure 5 there is need to address structural inequities in the United States.

Community College Context

Community colleges are central institutions in the promotion of educational equity. The AACC (2004) defines community colleges as accredited higher educational institutions that offer associate degrees, certificates, academic preparation, workforce training, and lifelong learning opportunities to people in the community. Early on, community colleges focused on general liberal arts studies. However, in the 1930s, community colleges began offering programs that provided job training in order to reduce the spread of unemployment. Following World War II, many occupations required new skills due to industrial production changes. In 1948, the Truman Commission proposed the creation of public-based colleges to accommodate the needs of the local community. Community colleges are often viewed as democratizing or meritocratic institutions that provide opportunity to those who have often experienced hardship (Cohen & Brawer, 2008; Goldrick-Rab, 2010; Roman, 2007; Wells, 2008).

Deegan and Tillery (1985) organized the history of community colleges into five generations: extension of high school, 1900-1930; junior college, 1930-1950; community college, 1950-1970; comprehensive college, 1970-1985; and new college, 1985-present. The term "community" has an important part of the identity of these colleges because of their intention to serve the diverse needs of the community and to

serve all segments of the community (Phillips, 2003). Community colleges historically

and continue to serve the needs of a diverse student population.

Community colleges were created in the early 20th century to help the United

States create a more highly skilled workforce (AACC, 2006). In particular, community

colleges were created to provide educational opportunities for 75 percent of the high

school graduates who were not attending college. Although the mission and

governance structure of the community colleges varies from state to state, the

community college today has the following functions: developmental education,

workforce education, and continuing education (Cohen & Brawer, 2002). Community

colleges are seen as the democratization of higher education (Young, 1997). For

populations frequently excluded from higher education, community colleges are often

publicized as mechanisms that not only allow entry, but also provide the training

necessary to earn a degree from a 4-year college. This excluded population includes a

diversity of students who have one or more of the following characteristics: low-income,

first-generation, academically ill-prepared, ethnic minority, part-time status, single

parents, in need of academic remediation and nontraditional in age (Fike & Fike, 2008;

Goldrick-Rab, 2010; Karp, O'Gara & Hughes, 2008). Community colleges have a very

important role with respect to providing access to groups of students who traditionally

have not pursued higher education. Community colleges are affordable and create a

bridge to obtaining a bachelor's degree for many underprepared but motivated students

(Dowd et al., 2006).

Some of the strengths of community colleges include their locations, lower costs,

open-door admissions, and the ability to provide vocational training, especially in a

volatile market where a quick response to local industry employment needs can be provided (Dougherty, 2008). Additional strengths that community colleges have to offer students and the local community include their openness and services to help address academic deficiencies. The open admission policy is an opportunity for the community college to support the democratizing of opportunities for people from low-income backgrounds (Goldrick-Rab, 2010; Provasnik & Planty, 2008). The significantly lower cost of attending a community college versus a 4-year institution is a tremendous strength, as many community college students are low income. Location is also a considerable strength as most community college students travel only 10 miles to attend college (Cohen & Brawer, 2008).

Diverse academic offerings allows for many students to either gain a certificate, an associate's degree, or take prerequisites necessary for transfer to the 4-year college. Furthermore, by allowing admission of some academically underprepared students, community colleges are giving opportunities to students and recognizing that students can overcome deficiencies and succeed with hard work, thereby allowing them to return to their community with employable skills. Through developmental education at community colleges, students can correct past deficiencies and move forward in gaining new skills (Cohen & Brawer, 2008; Goldrick-Rab, 2010).

Student Profile: Who Are Community College Students?

Community college demographics indicate that 20 percent of community college students are married parents, 15 percent are single parents, and 10 percent are married without children, with the remainder being single students. Fifty-three percent of community college students are over the age of 23, and 35 percent are over the age of

30, demonstrating that almost 75 percent of community college students are considered "nontraditional" in age (Chaves, 2006; Cox & Ebbers, 2010; Goldrick-Rab, 2010). Many nontraditional students enroll part-time due to the demands of balancing their families and careers. Additional demographics of community colleges indicate that more than 50 percent of community college students hold jobs as compared to 37 percent of students at 4-year colleges. Over 61 percent of community college students have to take at least one developmental education course and close to 25 percent have to take two developmental education courses or more (Goldrick-Rab, 2010). Students of color combined make up 40 percent of community college population, compared to 33 percent at 4-year colleges. First-generation college students comprise 38 percent of community college enrollment compared to 25 percent at 4-year colleges, and women make up 56 percent of community college enrollment compared to 53 percent at 4-year institutions (Goldrick-Rab, 2010).

The student demographic characteristics that community colleges serve parallel the risk factors for persistence and retention within higher education. These risk factors are found in community college students at significantly higher rates than 4-year public university students. Based on data from the USDOE, seven risk factors have been shown to negatively impact persistence and retention in higher education: delayed postsecondary enrollment, part-time enrollment, having a GED instead of a high school diploma, working full-time, being financially independent, having children or dependents, and being a single parent (Coley, 2000).

Educational Outcomes of Community Colleges

Community colleges are considered society's institutions of transformation responsible for developing the whole person regardless of race, gender, and socioeconomic status. Because of their open admissions policy, accessibility, and affordability, community colleges attract more students than ever (Alfonso, 2006; Rendón, 1998; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005; Seidman, 2005). Across the United States, nearly 1,200 community colleges play a vital role in higher education. Community colleges enroll more than 11.5 million students, nearly half of all undergraduates, and they attract a higher proportion of low-income, first generation, and students of color (Lumina Foundation for Education, 2004; Wolf-Wendel, Twombly, Morphew, & Sopchich, 2004).

Although community colleges provide access and opportunity for a diverse set of students, student success (as measured by degree and certificate completion and transfer) is relatively poor. Specifically, the low rate of degree attainment among community college students pursuing an associate's degree is an ongoing concern. Despite accounting for 45 percent of the total undergraduate enrollment rate, only half of community college students persist to their second year of college. Of this group, only one-third attains an associate's degree within 3 years (McIntosh & Rouse, 2009). Low-income and students of color are disproportionately represented in community college enrollment but substantially under-represented among those attaining associate degrees (Phillippe & Sullivan, 2005; Porter, 2002).

The gap in educational attainment among groups is often referred to as a lack of equity in the attainment of educational outcomes. Equitable outcomes are defined as

the attainment of similar outcomes for all ethnic groups at the same educational institution (Bensimon, 2005a). Students of color comprise 45 percent of the student population enrolled in community colleges (AACC, 2011). Less than one-third of African-American and Hispanic students earn an associate's degree 6 years after initially enrolling at a community college (Bliss & Sandiford, 2004; Soares & Mazzeo, 2008). More than half of community college students are in the two lowest income quartiles, with less than 20 percent of students in the lowest income quartile attaining an associate's degree within 6 years of initial enrollment (Bailey et al., 2005).

First-generation, traditional-aged students account for over one-third of all undergraduate students (Dervarics, 2000) and 42 percent of the student body at community colleges (National Center for Education Statistics, 2009). In general, first-generation students are more likely to be Hispanic, African-American, female, and low-income (Engle, 2007; Horn & Nevill, 2006; Kuh, Kinzie, Schuh, & Whitt, 2005; Nomi, 2005). First-generation students are more likely to come from low-income households with a median annual household income of approximately $31,000, which is lower than the household incomes of non-first generation college students (Nomi, 2005). Overall, low-income, students of color, and first-generation students are disproportionately represented in community college enrollment but substantially under-represented among those attaining an associate's degree (Bliss & Sandiford, 2004; Soares & Mazzeo, 2008).

Addressing Inequity

Achievement gaps are frequently symptoms of structural inequities that require intervention at an institutional level in order to realize equity and achieve student

success. Structural inequity provides a necessary lens for identifying the institutional and systemic barriers that impede student success. For example, 38 percent of White students who began at a community college earned a degree or certificate within 6 years versus 26 percent of African Americans and 29 percent of Hispanics (Price, 2004). Community colleges need to be conscious of how the academic world and the world of middle- and upper-class students are much more congruent than those students of color and low-income students (Rendón, 2006). Rendón explains, "Once underserved students cross into the college world, they often experience cultural incongruity in the form of alienation, marginalization, and possibly even cultural attacks such as stereotyping and discrimination" (p 4). A structural inequity lens provides community colleges with the awareness. Structural characteristics need to include those things related to these students, such as percentage of faculty of color; multicultural curriculum; availability of financial aid; cross-cultural centers; and diversity training for faculty, staff, and administration. Having an inclusive, multicultural curriculum and using pedagogical strategies such as learning communities, active learning, and connecting content to students' lives or "real work" experiences have been found to make a difference for underserved students (Rendón, 1998). For example, Laura Rendón (1998) concludes:

- Campus climates should affirm diversity, employ culturally competent and diverse faculty, staff and administration, engage in multicultural curriculum and pedagogy, promote and validate, and plan an accountable diversity action plan that includes goals, strategies, budget and data about student achievement at all levels.

- Structural characteristics need to include those things related to these students, such as, percentage of faculty of color, multicultural curriculum, availability of financial aid, cross-cultural centers, and diversity training for faculty, staff and administration.

- Having an inclusive, multicultural curriculum and using pedagogical strategies such as learning communities, active learning, and connecting content to students lives or "real work" experiences have been found to make a difference for underserved students.

In addition to individual-level considerations, if the achievement gap is not addressed, the economic livelihood of the United States and social welfare of the American populace are likely to suffer (Lumina Foundation for Education, 2011). Addressing the achievement gap in postsecondary educational attainment is critical (Bensimon, 2007).

Community colleges are especially well situated to promote equity in education given their open admission policy, affordable tuition, comprehensive curricula, and extensive student services. For colleges to have a student-centered vision and promote student success requires the commitment to explore achievement gaps from a multitude of perspectives, including the influence of race, class, and power. In order to work towards equity, community colleges need to be aware of the structural inequities that exist for their students as a result of institutional policies, practices, societal norms, and assumptions. The presence of inequitable educational outcomes historically under-represented student groups (first-generation, low-income, and students of color) is of particular importance. If institutions do not find ways to assess and address the

problem of differential outcomes, inequities will become more pronounced. The student

who does not graduate represents a lost investment for the institution and society.

There are economic ramifications for students who drop out. The median earnings of

people with a high school diploma are 37 percent less than a person with a bachelor's

degree (USDOE, 2006). Some form of higher education is required for people to thrive

and survive in American society. The postsecondary system of most importance in

regard to access, remediation and equity of student outcomes is the community college

system. Equity needs to be seen as a measure of institutional effectiveness for

community colleges.

Chapter Summary

This chapter discusses the literature and theoretical foundation to this research.

The guiding theoretical framework is social equity. "Social equity is a commitment to

attack disparity and advance equality for persons in groups that have been [or in the

future might be] subject to treatment that is inferior, prejudicial or hostile" (Johnson &

Svara, 2011, p. 281). Inequity is hardwired into the American education system, as

seen in the importance income levels play in determining high school, college, and long-

term success. Because community college students are much more likely to be

nontraditional (low-income, minority, older, parents, employed full or part time,

immigrants, etc.), they are more susceptible to the problems caused by inequities. But

community colleges have a powerful opportunity to address these inequities. The

purpose of this study was to examine the efforts of community colleges, as public

institutions, to promote equity and eliminate achievement gaps for low-income, first-

generation, and students of color. Chapter 3 discusses the methodology and analytical

framework for this study.

CHAPTER 3. METHODOLOGY

Good policy and good practice begin with good data. – Chris Baldwin

Community colleges play a key role in the national college completion agenda (AACC, 2010). In order for these goals to be met, significant effort to close achievement gaps and promote educational equity is required at the community college level. Achieving the Dream is a multiyear initiative founded in 2004 by the Lumina Foundation for Education. The central goal of Achieving the Dream—which began in 26 colleges in five states (commonly referenced as Round 1 of the initiative)—is to increase student success rates by involving the larger campus community in analyzing data on student outcomes, developing strategies for improvement, and institutionalizing practices that prove effective. Colleges participating in the initiative are also expected to advance educational equity by identifying and addressing any achievement gaps that exist among their students, particularly for low-income students and students of color.

The purpose of this research is to examine a subset of community colleges participating in the Achieving the Dream efforts to promote equity through a focus on student success and the closing of achievement gaps. This examination is guided by analyzing how colleges use data to create a culture of evidence to understand student progression patterns and ultimately, improve equity. This chapter presents the qualitative research design and includes the following subsections: methodological

approach; case study–Achieving the Dream; secondary data analysis; data sources and collection procedures; data analysis, and research contribution.

Methodological Approach

This research analyzes the implementation of social equity within Round 1 community colleges participating in Achieving the Dream in an effort to understand: (a) their efforts to promote student success through equity, (b) their commitment to social equity, and (c) the institutional change that is necessary to create an institutional culture that values social equity and is accountable for equitable student outcomes.

Research Questions

This study addresses the following questions:

- How are Achieving the Dream Round 1 community colleges conceptualizing a vision of equity?

- What is the role of data in helping Achieving the Dream Round 1 community colleges become equity focused?

- How is equity implemented, measured, and achieved by Achieving the Dream Round 1 community colleges?

The research questions that guide this study examine the implementation of equity to promote student success for underserved students at community colleges. These research questions are examined though a case study approach based on a qualitative analysis of secondary data. The primary data sources include interview data from field visits, annual reports program documents, and student achievement data. (Each of these data sources is discussed in detail later in this chapter.)

Qualitative Inquiry

Qualitative inquiry approaches are designed for in-depth analysis of research questions to illuminate a situation, person, or phenomenon so that others may understand the object being studied (Stake, 1995). According to Stake (1995), qualitative research is holistic, empirical, interpretive, and empathic. Corbin and Strauss (2008) define broadly framed research questions that are exploratory in nature as best suited for qualitative inquiry. Qualitative research excels at telling the story from the participant's viewpoint, providing the rich descriptive detail that sets quantitative results into their human context (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). As Patton (1990) explains, qualitative research is an effort to understand situations in their uniqueness as part of a particular context and the interactions there. Roueche, Johnson, and Roueche (1997) expand on this idea of contextual data indicating that the data provides an opportunity to better understand and assess quality differences among institutions in relation to the context in which they operate.

Utilizing a qualitative methodological approach, this study provides context and an understanding of educational institutions focused on increasing the student success and the relationship of equity to that focus within Achieving the Dream. This type of analysis strives for depth of understanding and requires openness to emerging patterns of meaning. The specific type of qualitative inquiry used in this study is a case study.

The Case Study Approach

Case studies focus on a single subject or unit. Trochim (2001) defines case study as an intensive study of specific individual or context. Similarly, Heck (2006) defines case studies as multiple sources of evidences used to provide an in-depth,

contextualized understanding of the phenomenon. Case studies often include content

analysis from multiple sources of data to create triangulation. "Case study research is a

method for learning about a complex instance, based on a comprehensive

understanding of that instance obtained by extensive description and analysis of that

instance as a whole and in its context" (General Accounting Office, 1990, p 15).

Merriam (2002) argued that a case study "is an intensive description and analysis of a

phenomenon or social unit" (p. 8). Creswell and Marietta (2002) provided further details

about case study methodology and argued that a "case study approach to qualitative

inquiry is focused less on discerning patterns of group and more on an in-depth

description of a process, a program, an event, or activity" (p. 162). Feagin, Orum, and

Sjoberg (1991) noted that regardless of whether a study is a single case or various

cases, "it is indispensable to the progress of the social sciences" (p. 1).

Yin (2003a) defined the case study as "an empirical inquiry that investigates a

contemporary phenomenon with its real-life context" (p. 13). Yin (2003a) determined

that an explanatory case study methodology is appropriate when: "(1) the form of the

research question is asking how, why, or what; (2) the research is not requiring control

over behavioral events; (3) the focus is on a contemporary set of events" (p. 14).

Yin (1994) suggested that the case study is "the preferred method to use when 'how' or

'why' questions are posed, when the investigator has little control over events, and

when the focus is on a contemporary phenomenon within some real-life context" (p. 1).

The case study methodology is appropriate for this study because it is applied to a

phenomenon that occurs in a real setting and infers information to contribute to theory.

Case study research is an important methodology for public administration scholarship. It provides practical information that can be used to guide organizations and practitioners. Because so much of what public administration seeks to accomplish is predicated on the understanding of constructed social reality, qualitative research in general, and case study methodology in particular, can provide insight to scholars and practitioners (Stivers, 2008). Utilizing a qualitative case study methodology has both strengths and limitations. One of the strengths is that a case study can gather information and data through a series of methods thus delving deeper into the issue being studied (Stark & Torrance, 2005; Yin, 1994). Yin (1994) argues an additional strength of the case study method is that "a case study permits the grounding of observations and concepts about social structures in natural settings studied at close hand" (p. 6). The case study's greatest strength, however, "lies on the ability to deal with a variety of evidence" (Yin, 1994, p. 8).

Conversely, a major limitation of case studies is that the results are not generalizable. It is difficult to reach from one case or a small number of cases to the population as a whole (Stark & Torrance, 2005, p. 33). Additionally, Yin (1994) suggested that a drawback for the case study method is that it can be influenced by the researcher "as his/her bias permeates the direction of the findings" (p. 9). The limitations within case study methodology can be mitigated by the number of sources used to define and explain the phenomenon being studied. Multiple sources of evidence allows for data triangulation (Yin, 2003b), which is particularly useful in substantiating conclusions based on case study analysis.

Case Study: Achieving the Dream

This research adheres to the organizational structure required of explanatory case study and focuses on the first 26 community colleges to join the Achieving the Dream initiative in 2004. A core objective of Achieving the Dream is to eliminate gaps in achievement between traditionally underserved students and all others ("Achieving the Dream," 2007). Each college participating in Achieving the Dream identifies student populations that currently experience low rates of success, develops interventions to improve student outcomes, and measure changes in student success. Institutions participating in Achieving the Dream are required to submit longitudinal student record data on cohorts of students to document student progression and success (Morest & Jenkins, 2007). A progression of goals set by Achieving the Dream calls for students' completion of remedial work leading to success in credit-bearing courses, persistence from one semester to another, and ultimately to a degree or certificate. Ultimately, the initiative seeks to help more students reach their individual goals.

Before Achieving the Dream existed, most community colleges did not track student progress over time. They also did not know if particular subgroups of students—whether defined by ethnicity, gender, socioeconomic status, or academic preparation—were falling behind in comparison to others. This lack of systematic knowledge about student success was in large part related to the nature of funding at community colleges; community colleges receive money largely on the basis of student enrollment at the beginning of the semester, and thus they have little incentive to invest in tracking student success rates. Furthermore, effective longitudinal tracking and analysis of student outcomes require data systems, staffing, and expertise beyond the

scope available at most community colleges. Achieving the Dream was created to provide colleges with both the resources and the skills to undertake this work, based on the theory that greater institutional awareness would propel community colleges to act on their concerns about student achievement.

Achieving the Dream operates on multiple fronts, including changes in the institutional practices and policies at participating colleges; research into effective practices at community colleges; public policy work; and outreach to communities, businesses, and the public. It emphasizes the use of data to drive change. The initiative promotes ground-level strategies to accomplish big-picture outcomes (Achieving the Dream, 2009).

This case study of Achieving the Dream focuses on the first group of community colleges that participated in the Initiative (also known as Round 1 colleges). This group of colleges was selected for analysis because Round 1 colleges are the furthest along in the implementation stage of the initiative, which provides an increased potential to find evidence of achieving or working towards social equity.

The Round 1 colleges joined the initiative in 2004 and included 26 community colleges located in Florida, New Mexico, North Carolina, Texas, and Virginia (see Table 3). The data for this analysis includes secondary analysis of two waves of field research conducted in 2006 and 2009, respectively. Both waves of field visits were conducted at each of the 26 Round 1 colleges. During the field visits at each college, interviews were conducted with individuals in the following roles: president/chancellor, core team leader/ Achieving the Dream coordinator, vice president/dean of instruction, vice president/dean of student services, institutional research director, data team leader,

Table 3

Round 1 Colleges, Years 2004-2005 and 2008-2009

State/college	Location	2004-2005 enrollment	2008-2009 enrollment
Florida			
Broward College	Ft. Lauderdale	22,540	24,634
Hillsborough Community College	Tampa	16,157	18,321
Tallahassee Community College	Tallahassee	9,819	10,947
Valencia Community College	Orlando	20,727	26,230
New Mexico			
Central New Mexico Community College	Albuquerque	14,955	16,930
New Mexico State University – Doña Ana	Las Cruces	3,656	4,872
Santa Fe Community College	Santa Fe	2,307	2,132
Southwestern Indian Polytechnic Institute	Albuquerque	699	536
University of New Mexico –Gallup Campus	Gallup	1,814	1,757
North Carolina			
Durham Technical Community College	Durham	4,028	3,819
Guildford Technical Community College	Jamestown	7,513	9,969
Martin Community College	Williamston	717	410
Wayne Community College	Goldsboro	2,911	2,954
Texas			
Alamo Community College District Central Office			
Northwest Vista College	San Antonio	3,448	12,866
Palo Alto College	San Antonio	3,416	8,622
San Antonio College	San Antonio	9,027	24,812
St. Philips College	San Antonio	5,521	12,060
Brookhaven College	Farmers Branch	6,629	6,818
Coastal Bend College	Beeville	2,893	2,483
El Paso Community College	El Paso	17,084	14,884
Galveston College	Galveston	1,583	1,306
Houston Community College System	Houston	26,341	32,262
South Texas College	McAllen	11,478	14,162
Southwest Texas Junior College	Uvalde	3,488	3,341
Virginia			
Danville Community College	Danville	2,470	2,503
Mountain Empire Community College	Big Stone Gap	1,846	1,932
Patrick Henry Community College	Martinsville	2,242	2,194
Paul D. Camp Community College	Franklin	821	915
Tidewater Community College	Norfolk	15,078	18,312

Adapted from U.S. Department of Education National Center for Education Statistics Integrated Postsecondary Education Data Systems (IPEDS).

vice president/dean of finance, information technology director, board member or community member, faculty/staff involved in strategy development, and faculty not in directly involved in Achieving the Dream. Focus groups with students participating in a key Achieving the Dream initiative or strategy were also conducted at each college.

Secondary Data Analysis

In this study, secondary analysis is used for several reasons. The original study provided a rich data set that provided an excellent fit with the research question in the secondary study. Secondary data analysis is the reanalysis of data with the purpose of answering new questions (Cook, 1974). The advantages most commonly associated with secondary analysis are the cost-effectiveness and convenience it provides to the secondary analyst (Miller, 1982). The use of data that are already collected saves time and money. Secondary analysis is efficient because data collection is often the most time-consuming and expensive component of the research process. Collection of data from large samples is time consuming and has many direct and indirect costs associated with obtaining access to specific populations for collection of specific data. Secondary analysis also allows the researcher to circumvent data collection problems (Jacobson, Hamilton, & Galloway, 1993). In secondary analysis, it is possible to examine the data more closely and in greater depth (Thorne, 1994). The use of secondary data analysis for this study allowed for the inclusion of all the Round 1 colleges instead of the limiting the study to subset of colleges due to limited resources.

Secondary analysis has a number of weaknesses. The researcher is unable to ask questions that come to mind while analyzing an interview; questions, if answered, might add to the overall understanding of the particular situation or interpretation. One

of the major limitations of secondary analysis is that the data reflect the perspectives and questions asked by the original investigators and may not adequately reflect the questions of interest to another investigator (Thorne, 1994). As noted by Elder, Pavalko, and Clipp (1993), the investigator is challenged to do what is possible and to shape the data to match the new research questions, which may require an intensive process of understanding the data set to be used, recoding variables, and changing research questions to match the data that is available.

According to Polit and Hungler (1995), a disadvantage of secondary analysis is that the investigator was not involved in planning for data collection, so important variables of interest, type of sample, and other design issues will not be included. Because secondary analysis is, by definition, an analysis of data for purposes other than those for which the data were originally collected, there may be a misfit between the data and the research questions posed by the new investigator.

A notable example of a limitation of using secondary analysis for this study is the absence of the student voice. This analysis does not include student perceptions on college's efforts to promote equity. Although this study is vulnerable to many of the limitations that are characteristic of secondary data analysis, one benefit is that the researcher was part of the original research team that conducted the primary data collection, and conducted seven of the 26 field visits.

Data Sources and Data Collection Procedures

The sources of data for this study include college field visits (in-depth interviews and focus groups), annual reports submitted by the colleges to Achieving the Dream, program documents, college websites, and quantitative institutional data

(demographics). Table 4 provides an overview of the data sources utilized for this study.

Table 4

Data Type and Analysis Plan

Data type	Description	Time frame	Analysis
Field visits	In-depth interviews and focus groups with community college students at all 26 community colleges.	Spring 2009	*Main source of data* Analyzed qualitatively for themes to answer research questions.
College websites	Digital representation of the community colleges' identity for all 26 community colleges.	2012	*Supporting data* Provides demonstration of institutionalization of efforts to promote student success, close achievement gaps, and value of equity.
Achieving the Dream website	Initiative posts content related to the community colleges and the work they are doing to promote student success.	2012	*Supporting data* Provides additional context or description of the community college efforts to promote equity.
Community college institutional data	Quantitative data includes demographic student data aggregated at the institutional level from Integrated Postsecondary System (IPEDS).	2004-2013	*Supporting data* Highlights achievement gaps, student progression through the institution.

Field Visits

The primary sources of data for this study were collected by a team of researchers led by Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation (MDRC). MDRC is a nonprofit, nonpartisan social policy research organization that is dedicated to learning what works to improve the well-being of low-income people. MDRC is one of the

founding partners of Achieving the Dream and led the evaluation efforts of the initiative.

Two-day field visits were conducted at the 26 Round 1 colleges. Field visits were

conducted in pairs allowing for researchers to alternate leading interviews or focus

groups and serving as the note taker or scribe. At each institution, individual interviews

and focus groups were conducted with key personnel and students in order to

understand the overall efficacy of Achieving the Dream and document reforms each

college had undertaken as a result of Achieving the Dream. Table 5 provides a listing of

the types of interviews and focus groups conducted at each college. It is important to

note that personnel at community colleges often wear multiple hats, resulting in some

overlap in positions. For instance, an Achieving the Dream coordinator may also be the

dean of instruction or institutional research director. Individual interviews lasted

between 45-60 minutes and focus groups lasted between 90-120 minutes on average.

Table 5

Achieving the Dream Round 1 2009 Field Visits

Individual interview types	Focus group types
President/Chancellor	Faculty involved with Achieving the Dream
Core team leader/Achieving the Dream Coordinator	Faculty not involved with Achieving the Dream
Vice President/Dean of Instruction	Student services staff involved in
Vice President/Dean of Student Services	Achieving the Dream
IR Director/Data Team Leader	Student services not involved in
Vice President/Dean of Finance	Achieving the Dream
IT Director	
External partners (e.g. board members, community members involved with Achieving the Dream activities)	
Faculty/staff/administrators involved in strategy development and implementation for Achieving the Dream	

By visiting each institution to conduct the individual interviews and focus groups, the researchers were also able to make observations about the college environment. Being on-site also allowed the colleges to show physical changes made in order to support student success.

The field guide included protocol for interviews and focus groups by type. The protocols were designed to gather the following information from all participants:

- Individual's perspective about Achieving the Dream at their college;

- Details about important aspects of the initiative, including committed leadership, the use of evidence to improve policies, programs, services, broad engagement and systemic institutional improvement;

- The impact of Achieving the Dream in helping colleges' move forward in the institutional reform process.

Appendix A includes the overall protocol used in the field. The major sections of the protocol are:

- Overview of Achieving the Dream at the institution.

- Leadership commitment to improving outcomes (Principle 1).

- Use of data for improvement (Principle 2).

- Broad engagement (Principle 3).

- Systemic institutional improvement (Principle 4).

- Strategy specific questions.

Assessing achieving the dream: Inputs and sustainability. The field guide provided a consistent structure to gather qualitative data that could be analyzed for themes across institutions. The protocol questions were organized in alignment with the

Achieving the Dream model for institutional change (see Figure 3) designed to promote student success and completion.

College Website

College websites provide supportive data to this analysis. The institutional websites provide context on what is being communicated at the college regarding student success, equity, culture of evidence, and Achieving the Dream. The college websites allow for triangulation and confirmation to the other data sources collected. For example, if a college shares that promoting student success is key part of their identity one would expect to see that reflected in their website and promotional documents used to represent the college. The college websites provide transparency to what the colleges' value and want to communicate about themselves to their students, community, employees, and general public.

Quantitative Institutional Data

Quantitative institutional data is another source of supportive data used in this study to highlight the challenges the colleges need to address in order to achieve equity. The source of the quantitative institutional data for this study is Integrated Postsecondary System (IPEDS) and includes basic demographic/background data aggregated at the college level: enrollment (by race and gender), tuition, graduation rate etc. For example, achievement gaps for underserved students, overall student progression patterns, barriers to completion of goals, and student demographics. The quantitative data is not the primary focus of this study but supports and informs the work the colleges are doing to promote student success.

Human Subjects Protection

As part of their agreement to participate in the Achieving the Dream initiative, the colleges agreed to participate in an evaluation of the initiative. The focus of MDRC's evaluation work was not to serve as evaluation of the individual colleges but an evaluation of the initiative. Similarly the focus of this study was the themes and patterns across the colleges. Prior to conducting field visits the interview and focus group protocol were submitted to MDRC's Institutional Review Board and Virginia Commonwealth University's Institutional Review Board (IRB). All interview and focus group participants provided written consent for their participation. All focus groups and individual interviews were digitally recorded. All digitally recorded data were securely stored and access to the recordings was limited to the research team. The identity of the participants is not disclosed in the findings of this research. All participants are referred to by their position. The subject matter of the research is not sensitive in nature and relates to the professional roles of the participants within their institutions. The IRB approval for this study is contained in Appendix B.

<p style="text-align:center">Data Analysis</p>

This is a qualitative study that relied primarily on secondary data analysis of field visits conducted as part of MDRC's evaluation work of Round 1 colleges in Spring 2009. For this research, the unit of analysis was community colleges. The approach for this study was to analyze in-depth interviews, focus groups, annual reports, and other documents. Using multiple sources of data allowed for triangulation, which enhanced the accuracy of the interpretation and allowed for data confirmation through consistency.

The qualitative data sources were coded for themes in order to answer the proposed research questions. All data were coded using Dedoose®, a qualitative analysis software. Dedoose® allows for the merging of multiple data sources.

Codebook Development

Creswell (2013) describes the process of coding as "aggregating the text or visual data into small categories of information" (184). It is the process of organizing the data and becomes the basis for developing the analysis (Gibbs, 2007). Codes are defined as "tags or labels for assigning units of meaning" to the data collected (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 56). Coding is guided by a coding schema or frame. According to Schreier (2012), the structure or generation of codes develops in one of three ways:

1. in a *concept-driven way,* i.e. based on what you already know;

2. in a *data-driven way,* i.e. by letting categories emerge from your material;

3. by *combining* the two strategies (p. 84)

The coding schema for this study were generated using both a concept-driven and data-driven strategy. A priori list of codes was created based upon the interview protocol, institutional change model of Achieving the Dream and the theoretical framework of social equity and structural inequity. For example, the codes "leadership" and "broad engagement" were included based on the knowledge that institutional change requires both leadership commitment and wide-ranging institutional involvement. Additionally, the Achieving the Dream model outlined a process for data-driven decision-making; the following codes align with this process: *use of data*, *achievement gaps*, and *evaluation*. The data-driven strategy emerged from the application and use of the a priori list of codes. The emergent codes represent the identification of themes and patterns and

build upon the preset codes (a priori). The complete list of codes are defined and operationalized through the development of a codebook.

A codebook is a set of codes, definitions, and examples used as a guide to help analyze interview data. Codebooks are essential to analyzing qualitative research because they provide a formalized operationalization of the codes (Crabtree & Miller, 1999; Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006; Fonteyn, Vettese, Lancaster, & Bauer-Wu, 2008; MacQueen, McLellan, Kay, & Milstein, 1998). As outlined in Table 6, the codebook was guided by the protocol and core research questions and outlined a schema for analysis across all of the interviews and focus groups. The findings outlined by research questions in Chapter 4 emerged from the patterns and themes identified using the codebook schema in Table 6.

Research Contribution

Understanding Round 1 Achieving the Dream community colleges' commitment to equity and perceptions of targeting underserved students through policies, strategies, and programs can be utilized to create a model/framework that guides community colleges in advancing social equity. Given the current demand in postsecondary enrollment, coupled with constraints on state funding, more states are planning to use community colleges as low cost alternatives to expanding their 4-year campuses, which increases the pressure on community college baccalaureate transfer performance. Community colleges are essential in meeting the nation's expanding needs for postsecondary education (Provasnik & Planty, 2008).

Table 6

Codebook

Code	Code Description	Protocol Section	Interview Protocol
Achievement Gaps	• Student outcomes disaggregated by race, gender, income, and first generation status • Addressing inequities • What students are being left behind? Underserved? Not achieving?	• Leadership Commitment (Vision and Values) • Use of Data (Process addressing gaps)	• (15) To what extent are inequities among racial income groups a problem are your school? Have the president and senior leaders made these inequities a focus of their work? • (34) What affect, if any, did AtD have on the college's awareness of or focus on achievement gaps?
Broad Engagement	• Role of faculty and staff in promoting student success and equity • Level of involvement of faculty and staff: implementing strategies, analyzing data, discussing inequities that need to be addressed • Involvement in institutional reform	• Leadership Commitment (Commitment Indicator) • Broad Engagement (Faculty and Staff) • Systemic Institutional (Institutional Management)	• (21) To what extent have faculty leaders indicated their commitment to improving student success? • (42) Do faculty and student services staff regularly work together on efforts to improve student success? • (53) What types of committees, if any does the college have to oversee or monitor institutional efforts to improve student outcomes
Equity	• Focus on equity • College defines equity and student success • Priorities	• Leadership Commitment (Vision and Values) • Systemic Institutional (Institutional Management)	• (17) To what extent has AtD had an impact on college's vision and goals for equity? • (47a) How, if at all, does this plan address student success and/or equity?
Evaluation	• How student outcomes are measured • Programmatic outcomes • Track and measure closing of achievement gaps	• Use of Data (Process addressing gaps and Evaluating Solutions)	• (31) To what extent does the college conduct surveys and focus groups with students, faculty, and staff to understand and improve the impact of programs and services? • (36) To what extent has the college conducted evaluations on its strategies to improve student achievement?

Table 6 – continued

Code	Code Description	Protocol Section	Interview Protocol
Institutional Challenges	• Areas that the college struggles to address • Areas of improvement it has not addressed • Difficulties meeting student needs or engaging them • Institutional barriers to creating student success environment	• Overview of AtD (Overarching)	• (10) What areas/ways do you think were more challenging for your college?
Institutional Changes	• University's plan to address unmet need related to student success • Program or policy recently implemented aimed at or related to student success • Any changes positive or negative that impact student success	• Leadership Commitment (Commitment)	• (20) Have the president and/or senior leaders made changes to school-wide policy or practices since the inception of Achieving the Dream?
Institutional Supports	• Any efforts to demonstrate student centeredness • Programs, curriculum, policies related to student life (supporting academics and engagement)		
Leadership	• Commitment of college president and senior leadership: to student success, to addressing inequities, and to promoting equity in student outcomes • Involvement in institutional reform	• Leadership Commitment (Vision and Values/ Commitment)	• (16) How does college communicate its agenda with the larger college environment and the community? • (23) In what ways, if any, has AtD affected the college president's and senior leader's commitment to student success?
Mission	• Impact of mission, strategic plan, or vision on students • What shapes the mission? • Changes to the mission (AtD)	• Systemic Institutional (Hiring and Prof Dev)	• (55) How do new faculty members/staff learn about the college's mission or vision? What, if anything, is said about the college's commitment to student success?

Table 6 – continued

Code	Code Description	Protocol Section	Interview Protocol
Strategies	• Approaches to enhancing student success as result of participating in AtD • Interventions or programs created or expanded • Needs addressed	• Presite (Management Strategies) • AtD Strategies	• (7) What specific strategies or practices has the institution implemented that focus on improving student success since the inception of Achieving the Dream? • (58) How does the strategy promote student success or address achievement gaps?
Student perceptions	• Student feedback via focus group • Colleges commitment to their success • Student culture	• Student Focus Group	• (74) Do you believe college is committed to helping all students succeed, particularly students of color and those who are low-income? • (77) How, if at all, do you feel like this program/class/intervention is helping you to succeed in college? • (80) What do you think the college could be doing better to help you improve your success as a student?
Student Success	• University's priorities and goals related to student success • How the University creates an environment or culture that encourages and supports students	• Systemic Institutional (Institutional Management)	• (48) What are the college's priorities or goals for improving student success?
Sustainability	• Student success strategies continued or expanded • Continue to monitor achievement gaps • Funding sources to support ongoing work to address inequities and promote student success	• Assessing AtD (Sustainability)	• (66) Which of the college's AtD efforts is the college considering trying to sustain going forward? What resources will be used to support them? • (67) Where does the college hope its AtD efforts will be (e.g., expand, modify) by next year (in the next 5 years)?

Table 6 – continued

Code	Code Description	Protocol Section	Interview Protocol
Use of data	• Culture of evidence • How data is being used to identify areas of concerns? • Collection and analysis of student progression data (cohort analysis) • Dissemination of data • Use or lack of use of data in decision making • Changes to data uses as a result of AtD	• Use of Data (addressing gaps) • Systemic Institutional (Institutional Management)	• (29) Does the college track the progress of students longitudinally? If so, what data is used? Which students are tracked? • (29b) Which key indicators does the college consider the best to assess student success? • (30) What, if any, have been key findings that have emerged from the college's longitudinal analysis • (47) To what extent has the college established a strategic planning process? How if it all, are student outcomes data used in this strategic planning process?

Given the importance of community colleges within the educational opportunity pipeline in the United States, this study aims to learn from colleges within the Achieving the Dream because of the framework of student success, equity and the culture evidence it promotes. This study highlights initiatives, programs, and approaches, for other community colleges to consider. It also provides other public organizations with an example of the institutional change, leadership, and buy-in needed to make a commitment to social equity. In addition to highlighting what is working, this study also explores stumbling blocks and barriers to closing achievement gaps and working towards equitable outcomes. This research is significant for multiple reasons. The growing gaps in postsecondary education, access, and success of students based on their race and ethnicity, and socioeconomic status undermine the goal of equity delineated in the Higher Education Act of 1965. This research helps to go beyond the goal of equity to the measure and understanding of what leads to forward movement toward equity and the closing of achievement gaps. Key to the identity of the community college is creating equity in opportunity to higher education by reaching those who are typically underserved by postsecondary educational institutions (Dowd, 2005). Often the mission of the community college is impeded by societal pressures and the elitism of higher education in this country. By addressing the gap in success experienced by minority students, low-income students, and first-generation students it ensures the nation's continued economic vitality as well as providing individual opportunities for the students (Dougherty & Hong, 2006).

CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

Access without support for student success is an empty promise. – Vincent Tinto

Introduction

Community colleges are vital to advancing educational and economic opportunity for many Americans, especially first-generation, low-income, and students of color. By promoting student success, colleges can address an important societal problem— America's growing racial disparities and disparities in income and wealth (MDC, Inc., 2006). The institutional expectation of community colleges is to help students, regardless of background and level of preparation, obtain a credential or degree and put them on the path to economic security. There is an increased focus on community colleges given the current status of the economy, national college completion rates, and an increasing mismatch between available jobs and the skills of those available to work (Parcell, 2012).

Navigating the politics of change is critical and difficult within any system, but a community college presents particular challenges of competing and interconnecting systems. Community colleges provide access to educational opportunities, but progress needs to be made in improving outcomes for students. This requires a shift from a focus on enrollment to one on student success. A college must consider how to

serve the most individuals and remain sustainable in educational programming; there is the reality of vastly different needs and learning styles. Colleges must determine what services to provide, for whom, and how to do that equitably and efficiently.

The purpose of this study was to examine the efforts of community colleges, as public institutions, to promote equity and eliminate achievement gaps for low-income, first-generation, and students of color. This research utilized a case study approach by focusing on community colleges participating in a national educational initiative: Achieving the Dream. Achieving the Dream's model of institutional improvement focuses on data and inquiry to drive broad-based institutional efforts to close achievement gaps and improve student outcomes overall. This chapter analyzes findings based on 333 interviews across the 26 Round I Achieving the Dream community colleges. The following research questions were used to guide the qualitative analysis of this study:

- How are Achieving the Dream Round 1 community colleges conceptualizing a vision of equity?

- What is the role of data in helping Achieving the Dream Round 1 community colleges become equity focused?

- How is equity implemented, measured, and achieved by Achieving the Dream Round 1 community colleges?

The findings in this chapter are organized by research question and conclude with patterns across colleges.

Research Question 1: How are Achieving the Dream Round 1 Community Colleges Conceptualizing a Vision of Equity?

The conceptualization of equity at the Round 1 community colleges is led by the presidents' and senior administrators' vision for equity at their institution and driven by these additional factors:

- The commitment of college leadership at all levels to promoting student success.

- The institutionalization of the college's commitment to equity and student success through their mission, strategic plan, and/or day-to-day operations.

- The broad engagement of faculty and staff across both academic and student services.

Table 7 provides a summary of the key findings related to the conceptualization of equity at Round 1 Achieving the Dream colleges. Seventy-seven percent of colleges heavily discussed the vision of equity being defined by leadership of their president and senior administrators. This factor was moderately discussed by 19 percent of colleges and only occasionally at one college. These findings suggest that the conceptualization of equity at these institutions is a top-down process guided by the leadership of the president and senior administrators.

Committed leadership is of central importance to the implementation of institutional reform. Leadership is vital to any continuous improvement process. Institutional change demands leadership, beginning at the president's[1] level with agenda-setting and decision-making authority that communicates the vision broadly—to

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[1] The term president is used to represent the chief executive officer or the highest level of internal leadership within in the community college or community college district. At some institutions this position is entitled Chancellor.

Table 7

Summary of Findings for Research Question 1

Name of college	Conceptualization of equity			
N = 26	Defined by president/senior administrator	Leadership commitment to student success	Institutionalized message	Broad engagement
Alamo Community College District	M	M	M	O
Brookhaven College	H	H	M	O
Broward College	H	H	H	M
Central New Mexico Community College	H	H	H	M
Coastal Bend College	H	H	H	M
Danville Community College	H	H	H	M
Durham Technical Community College	H	H	H	M
El Paso Community College	H	H	M	M
Galveston College	H	H	H	O
Guilford Technical Community College	H	H	H	H
Hillsborough Community College	H	H	H	H
Houston Community College System	H	H	H	M
Martin Community College	M	M	O	O
Mountain Empire Community College	M	M	O	O
New Mexico State University-Dona Ana	H	H	M	O
Patrick Henry Community College	H	H	H	H
Paul D. Camp Community College	H	H	M	M
Santa Fe Community College	H	H	H	M
South Texas College	H	H	H	H
Southwest Texas Junior College	H	H	M	M
Southwestern Indian Polytechnic Institute	M	M	O	O
Tallahassee Community College	H	H	H	H
Tidewater Community College	H	H	H	M
University of New Mexico-Gallup Campus	O	O	R	R
Valencia Community College	H	H	H	H
Wayne Community College	M	M	O	O

Table 7 - continued

Name of college	Conceptualization of equity							
	Defined by president/senior administrator		Leadership commitment to student success		Institutionalized message		Broad engagement	
N = 26	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Legend								
H-Heavily discussed (75 percent of interviews and above).	H(20)	77	H(20)	77	H(15)	58	H(7)	27
M-Moderately discussed (50-74 percent of interviews).	M(5)	19	M(5)	19	M(6)	23	M(10)	38
O-Occasionally discussed (25-49 percent of interviews).	O(1)	4	O(1)	4	O(4)	15	O(8)	31
R-Rarely discussed (less than 25 percent of interviews).					R(1)	4	R(1)	4

trustees, to faculty, to staff, to students, to the community—and makes the new way of

doing business a priority. Achieving the Dream places a focus on developing the

leaders' commitment to student success. Presidential leadership is essential to enable

institutional change that will improve student outcomes. A college counselor from a

Florida community college noted:

> Because the president and the entire administration are behind it, people are
> more responsive than if it is the student services office only or instructional office
> only. It presents a better picture of the institutional commitment. Also, if the
> president says it has to be done, you do it. (Interview 22)

mobilize broad support for that vision throughout the college and community (MDC, Inc.,

2006). A president at a Virginia community college summed it up by saying, "If the

president does not signal that student success matters, it's not going to happen on its

own. The president has to signal that it is important" (Interview 327).

Promotion of Student Success

Bailey and Morest (2006) define the equity agenda as having three components:

(a) equity in college preparation, (b) access to college, and (c) success in satisfying

college goals. Community colleges with their open-door mission afford access to higher

education for a large number of students by giving them a higher education opportunity

no matter where they attended high school or the educational and financial resources of

their families. For example, a Florida college president explicitly and directly engaged

the issue of race. Addressing barriers to student success is key to the priorities and

leadership vision of this college. According to this president, "Student success is

students finishing what they start. If you do not teach, your job is to help students get to

class in the best condition for learning. Access changes self-perception and degrees

and certificates change lives" (Interview 30). The colleges are addressing the inequities

on the path to student success. However, access is not enough. A shift from a focus on enrollment to one on student success is needed.

By participating in Achieving the Dream the Round 1 colleges are engaged in a process of institutional improvement to increase student success. The promotion of student success is at the core of the vision of equity for the colleges. Colleges are addressing the inequities that impede student achievement. Presidents and senior administrators expressed a strong commitment to student success. The commitment to student success was heavily discussed at 77 percent of colleges and moderately discussed at 23 percent of colleges. Over 95 percent of presidents, senior administrators, and faculty leaders indicated they were committed to improving student success at their institution. Seventy-nine percent of presidents, senior administrators, and faculty leaders made a strong commitment while 19 percent made a moderate commitment. Figure 6 reports leadership level commitment to improving student success. Although commitment to improving student success is high among all three groups, both senior administrators and faculty leaders overall indicated more of a commitment to improving student success than did college presidents.

In addition, over 80 percent of these leaders identified the Achieving the Dream initiative as an important catalyst for strengthening their institution's student success agenda. As one president from a North Carolina community college shared, "As we became involved in AtD [Achieve the Dream], we realized that education opportunity
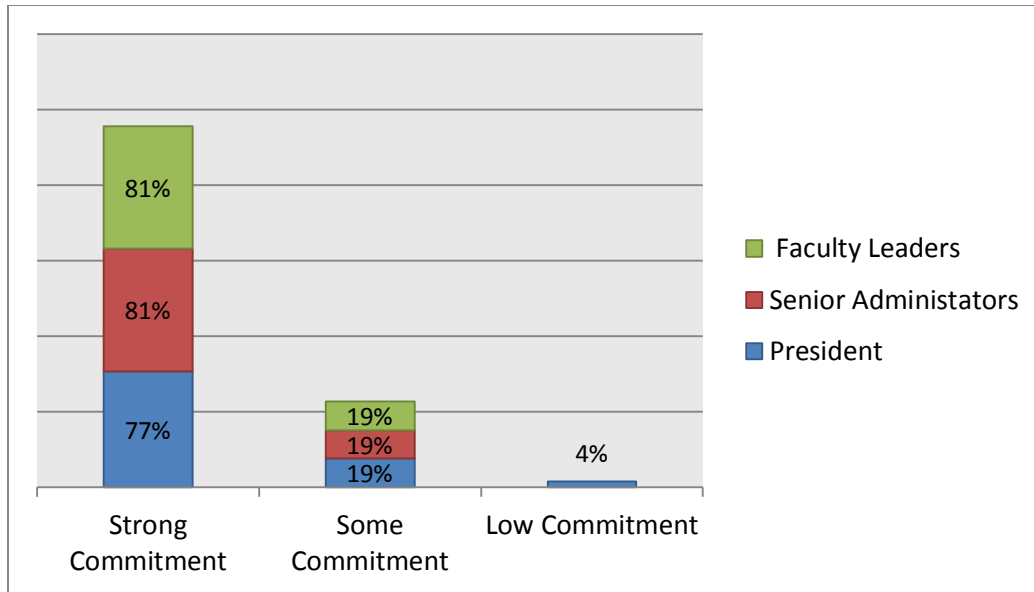
Figure 6. Leadership commitment to improving student success.

does provide for greater equity, which has in turn informed our strategic plan. The

subtext of our mission is equity" (Interview 112). Institutional leadership is important in

promoting data-based decision-making and in making success for students of color and

low-income students a priority.

Institutionalizing Equity and Student Success

A majority of the Round 1 colleges made a strong leadership commitment to

become success-oriented institutions focused on systemic efforts to improve student

achievement. Fifty-eight percent of Round 1 college administrators heavily discussed

how the conceptualization of equity and promotion had been institutionalized at their

colleges. This factor was moderately discussed by 23 percent of colleges and

occasionally discussed at 15 percent of colleges. Their vision of equity and promotion

of student success is not fleeting but represents a paradigm shift in how these colleges

operate. This commitment is evident in the missions, visions, and strategic plans of

many of the Round 1 colleges. A student services director at a North Carolina college

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stated, "Our core mission is to help students succeed" (Interview 139). A president from

a New Mexico college indicated, "The mission/vision of the college is absolutely related

to student success. Achieving the Dream has changed how that mission is carried out,

how we do business" (Interview 78). A vice president of student services and

enrollment management at a Texas college shared:

> Achieving the Dream helped to create an 'access to success' mind shift at the
> institutional level. Concrete benchmarks in persistence [and] retention were
> developed as a result. Initially retention and graduation rates were rather flat—
> there was a need and a desire to increase fall-to-spring, fall-to-fall retention rates.
> It has transformed the way we do business. We changed our mission and goals
> to reflect our commitment to student success. (Interview 242)

The Round 1 colleges have taken meaningful action to integrate its student success

agenda into all aspect of its operations.

Broad Engagement and Breaking Down Silos

Once institutionalized, the promotion of student success and achieving equity in

student outcomes becomes the responsibility of everyone within the institution. Change

demands leadership, beginning at the presidential level, with agenda setting and

decision-making authority that communicates the vision broadly to faculty, staff,

students, and to the community. There must be leaders distributed throughout the

institution. This distributed leadership encourages broad engagement and support for

the institutional change and commitment to student success. It is achieved by engaging

individuals at all levels in meaningful dialogue and communicating goals and

expectations. Dedicated leaders set the vision for an institution (Parcell, 2012). For

example, a student services director at a Florida community college shared, "The

message from the dean on down is student success. It's a student-oriented operation.

There are many programs specifically designed for student success. At some Broward

campuses, there will literally be banners that say, 'Student Success' (Interview 10). A faculty member at a Texas college stated, "Student success is everyone's job. That slogan put the responsibility on every employee. It makes you feel we are all in this together" (Interview 167).

The unified message and mission of student success has helped many of the Round 1 colleges break down silos that existed between academic and student affairs. A vice president of instruction at a North Carolina college said, "Achieving the Dream has forced people out of their individual silos, forced people to work together" (Interview 135). Faculty and student services staff in an effort to improve student outcomes are working on interventions together. A faculty member at a Texas college shared, "The biggest challenge was that we had to adapt from working in silos to become more of a collaborative kind of thing" (Interview 225). A student services coordinator at a Texas college indicated, "There's a long history of silos here, but this has gotten better once we have had faculty and staff work together on a number of projects" (Interview 176). A president at a New Mexico college credits the breakdown of silos in helping his institution focus on innovative solutions to problems facing the college. He shared:

> Getting away from the silos that exist in complex organizations has done a lot to generate new practices and values that allow us to reexamine our educational mission in ways they may not have looked at before. Our focus is on innovative solutions to the problems facing the college. (Interview 101)

Overall, Round 1 colleges (80 percent) reported faculty and staff participation in strategy development, as well as their work together on leadership or planning committees, has increased collaboration between faculty and staff. The most popular way colleges involved faculty and staff in their institutional reform process was through the development and implementation of strategies aimed at improving student success.

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Eighty-eight percent of colleges involved faculty and staff in developing new interventions to increase students' achievement. Colleges with heavy faculty and staff engagement tended to have these personnel involved in multiple interventions throughout the college; those with moderate levels of participation tended to have a handful of faculty and staff implementing a select number of strategies.

Research Question 2: What is the Role of Data in Helping Achieving the Dream Round 1 Community Colleges Become Equity Focused?

Round 1 Achieving the Dream colleges are implementing a culture of data-driven decisions, focusing on regular internal discussions about data and its use. They are improving their ability to analyze student outcome data and to have hard conversations about where improvement is needed. Traditionally, community colleges have tended to focus more on meeting the reporting requirements of government agencies and private funders and less on capturing the internal trends in students' achievement (Morest & Jenkins, 2007). Promoting student success is not a one size fits all approach. Colleges use data to understand where their students are experiencing problems. The data help colleges devise appropriate responses—changes in policies, practices, structures, and institutional culture—to improve retention and success. Most colleges noted that the data-driven approach allows them to move beyond anecdotal data to solid data that identifies clear trends in their student progression. An institutional research director at a Virginia college shared, "It has improved the perception of the need to use data in decisions rather just shooting off the hip" (Interview 310). Making a similar point, a faculty member at a Texas college shared, "We use data, because what we think is best for the students isn't necessarily always best" (Interview 225). Presidents and senior administrators interviewed indicated that the data-driven focus of Achieving the Dream

has helped them utilize student progression and outcome data to guide their decision making.

Use of Data to Promote Equity

This analysis suggests colleges use data to promote equity in four primary ways:

- To diagnose the institution's strengths and areas that need improvement.

- To generate the institutional will for change.

- To guide the college in setting priorities and choosing strategies.

- To assess the impact of new policies and practices.

Table 8 provides a summary of the key findings related to the role of data in helping Achieving the Dream Round 1 community colleges become equity focused.

Diagnosis. The use of data as a diagnostic tool was the most common way colleges use data to promote equity. This factor was heavily discussed (38 percent) and moderately discussed (42 percent) at Round 1 Achieving the Dream colleges. Data are viewed as fundamental to effective institutional decision making for these colleges. A vice president of instruction at a Virginia college indicated, "There was a lot of research and data collected for the culture of evidence here at the institution, which is where they came up with the six priorities" (Interview 332). Colleges begin their analysis by analyzing outcomes for all students and examining differences by race, ethnicity, sex, age, income, and other demographic characteristics. Colleges examine demographic patterns in the following areas: (a) successful completion of

Table 8

Summary of Findings for Research Question 2

Name of college	Role of data in equity focus			
N = 26	**Serves as diagnostic**	**Disaggregate data by race**	**Serves as motivator for institutional change**	**Used to develop specific strategies**
Alamo Community College District	O	R	O	O
Brookhaven College	M	O	M	M
Broward College	H	M	M	M
Central New Mexico Community College	M	H	H	H
Coastal Bend College	M	R	M	O
Danville Community College	M	H	H	M
Durham Technical Community College	H	H	H	H
El Paso Community College	H	O	M	M
Galveston College	M	O	M	O
Guilford Technical Community College	H	M	M	H
Hillsborough Community College	H	H	H	H
Houston Community College System	M	M	M	M
Martin Community College	R	O	M	O
Mountain Empire Community College	M	R	M	M
New Mexico State University-Dona Ana	M	O	M	M
Patrick Henry Community College	H	O	M	M
Paul D. Camp Community College	M	M	M	O
Santa Fe Community College	M	H	H	M
South Texas College	H	O	H	H
Southwest Texas Junior College	M	R	O	O
Southwestern Indian Polytechnic Institute	R	R	O	R
Tallahassee Community College	H	H	H	H
Tidewater Community College	H	M	M	M
University of New Mexico-Gallup Campus	O	O	M	O
Valencia Community College	H	H	H	H
Wayne Community College	O	M	M	O

Table 8 - continued

Name of college	Role of data in equity focus							
	Serves as diagnostic		Disaggregate data by race		Serves as motivator for institutional change		Used to develop specific strategies	
N = 26	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Legend								
H-Heavily discussed (75 percent of interviews and above).	H(10)	38	H(7)	27	H(8)	31	H(7)	27
	M(11)	42	M(6)	23	M(15)	58	M(10)	38
M-Moderately discussed (50-74 percent of interviews).	O(3)	12	O(8)	31	O(3)	12	O(8)	31
	R(2)	8	R(5)	19			R(1)	4
O-Occasionally discussed (25-49 percent of interviews).								
R-Rarely discussed (less than 25 percent of interviews).								

developmental courses; (b) enrollment in and successful completion of gatekeeper courses, such as English 101 and Math 101; (c) completion of enrolled credit hours; (d) re-enrollment from one semester to the next, and (e) earned certificates and degrees.

The initial analysis serves to identify demographic inequities for each college, illuminating strengths and problem areas for particular populations of students. It likely generates questions that can then be explored through more detailed data analysis and qualitative exploration—interviewing and/or surveying students, faculty, and staff to understand, for example, why low-income students have a consistently low pass rate in Math 101, or why Hispanics have a low retention rate from one semester to the next.

Achievement Gaps

A key role of data in the advancement of equity is the identification of achievement gaps that exist among students, particularly for low-income students and students of color (Achieving the Dream, 2009). Achievement gaps are identified through the problem identification or diagnosis process. A key factor to promoting students and eliminating achievement gaps is data. Most colleges (81 percent) disaggregate their student progression and outcome data by race and income. However, the disaggregation of data does not translate into the use of the data. The disaggregation of data by student groups, especially by race and income, can help colleges identify inequities in their student outcomes that need to be addressed in promoting student success. Only 54 percent of colleges reported using disaggregated data by race and income to address achievement gaps, inform policy changes, or interventions. Low-income and students of color are not progressing or completing at the same rate.

Colleges reported differing comfort levels in focusing on race. For example, the president of a Florida college indicated, "Equity is important to us. We have looked at the data and the evidence and are closing the gaps" (Interview 41). The dean of student success at a Virginia college shared, "There's so much tied up in race, we don't know what to do about it. There's so much pain about this. . .I'm not sure what to do about this and how to handle this" (Interview 260). While other colleges find it necessary for the promotion of student success at their institution to focus on their students of color. As a Virginia college president indicated, "If we focus on the at-risk piece of minorities, everybody wins. Effective student success strategy for minorities is effective student success strategy for everyone" (Interview 327).

Generate Will for Change

When presented effectively, data analysis is a powerful tool for institutional change. The Round 1 Achieving the Dream colleges heavily discussed (31 percent) and moderately discussed (58 percent) data serving as a motivator for change, specifically change to improve their student outcomes and the overall success of their students. A student services staff member at a Virginia college discussed how the data motivated her college to focus on inequities identified by the data. She shared:

> The majority of our students are first-generation college students. This made me aware of how many of our students are the first in their family to come to school. I think I was of the mindset of everyone going to college. It helped me work with students and understanding it—for them, it's a foreign environment. This helps us adapt to the process of coming onto campus. (Interview 271)

Such data analysis allows a college to better understand student progression patterns by demographic groups. It provides concrete and specific information to inequities that were previously less well understood or recognized. Discussions about data can

produce dissonance for college faculty, staff, and administrators who did not clearly understand the equity implications of student outcomes. Data analysis can create a potent force for change by underscoring gaps between institutional values and actual institutional performance. It can motivate people to examine their own behavior to see if they are part of the problem, and it can spur them to work for change.

Setting Priorities and Guiding Strategies

A focused analysis of student outcomes is invaluable in designing effective responses. Colleges discussed the use of data to develop specific strategies or interventions less frequently than other aspects of data use. The use of data to develop specific strategies was heavily discussed by 27 percent of colleges and moderately discussed by 38 percent of colleges. The data were key to problem identification and determining action needed to be taken but did not always correlate to actual decision making. An institutional research director at a Texas college shared, "I think we need to do a lot more in terms of outreach so that people do understand and use data" (Interview 228). Data must be accessible in order to be used effectively for decision making. When the college knows which students are not succeeding and where in the system they are faltering, it can tailor policies and programs to solve those problems.

Assessing Impact of Policies

When a college has baseline data on student outcomes for different groups, it can more readily assess the effect of new policies and practices. This completes the cycle begun with the initial diagnosis. An institutional researcher at a Virginia college shared the role data has played in focusing the entire college on student success:

> It has pushed the institution towards focusing on student success. Why aren't our dev ed [developmental education] students getting through? Why aren't we

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doing better on graduation rates? My office has looked at this for many, many years. The capabilities were in place to track students, etc., but was anybody listening? Not many. Now there are a whole lot more people listening, more of a focus on student success. (Interview 325)

Over time, the college can determine which innovations are making a difference and expand their scope; when an intervention proves ineffective, the college can try something else. Improving student outcomes is the core goal of Achieving the Dream—helping colleges put systems in place to monitor their progress in improving student success. A community college needs to know how well it is doing in relation to its past performance to monitor improvements and make adjustments when its practices are not producing the intended results. A data-driven improvement process helps ensure the right conditions for innovation. By cultivating a culture of inquiry and evidence, the initiative helps ensure that colleges assess the results of new policies and practices and modify them over time to increase their effectiveness.

Research Question 3: How is Equity Implemented, Measured, and Achieved by Achieving the Dream Round 1 Community Colleges?

Round 1 community colleges, as part of their efforts to achieve equity in student success, are implementing strategies, evaluating the impact of those strategies on student outcomes, and tracking their progress toward meeting their overall goals. Table 9 provides a summary of the key findings related to the efforts of Achieving the Dream Round 1 community colleges to implement, measure, and achieve equity.

Table 9

Summary of Findings for Research Question 3

Name of college	Implementing, measuring, achieving equity		
	Equity focused strategies	**Evaluation plan**	**Scorecard**
Alamo Community College District	0	No	No
Brookhaven College	0	No	No
Broward College	2 (male and hiring)	Yes	No
Central New Mexico Community College	0	Yes	Yes
Coastal Bend College	0	No	No
Danville Community College	0	Yes	Yes
Durham Technical Community College	1 (male)	Yes	No
El Paso Community College	1 (ESL)	Yes	No
Galveston College	0	No	No
Guilford Technical Community College	1 (male)	Yes	Yes
Hillsborough Community College	2 (male and conference)	Yes	No
Houston Community College System	1-2 male	Yes	No
Martin Community College	0	No	No
Mountain Empire Community College	0	No	No
New Mexico State University-Dona Ana	0	No	No
Patrick Henry Community College	0	Yes	No
Paul D. Camp Community College	1 (PD)	No	No
Santa Fe Community College	1 (diversity)	No	No
South Texas College	1 (poverty)	Yes	Yes
Southwest Texas Junior College	0	No	No
Southwestern Indian Polytechnic Institute	0	No	No
Tallahassee Community College	1 (male)	Yes	Yes
Tidewater Community College	0	Yes	Yes
University of New Mexico-Gallup Campus	1 (cultural series)	No	No
Valencia Community College	1 (community)	Yes	No
Wayne Community College	2 (male and female)	No	No
N = 26	13 (50%)	13 (50%)	6 (23%)

Strategies and Interventions

As part of the Achieving the Dream initiative, the Round 1 colleges were encouraged to utilize the following process for strategy development and implementation:

- Development: Organization of strategies around identified problems from their student outcome data. Utilization of best practices for creating interventions to address identified problems.

- Implementation: Creation of detailed plans for carrying out strategies and proposed institutional changes. Most plans included a pilot stage.

- Evaluation: Collection of data on strategies to determine if they are addressing their intended problem. Are student outcomes improving? Are achievement gaps closing? Is equity being achieved?

- Refinement: Modification of strategies based up evaluations of the interventions.

- Scale Up: Expansion of successful strategies to reach more students.

- Institutionalization: Continuation of strategy and inclusion of intervention in colleges ongoing operation and budget.

The colleges adopted multiple, distinct strategies ranging from student support services, curricular reforms, policy changes, and professional development opportunities. Serious effort was made to develop and implement interventions that improve student outcomes. One-hundred seventy-four instructional and student service interventions were implemented by Round 1 colleges. Table 10 captures the instructional and student support interventions that reach students directly. The most popular type of

strategies were tutoring or supplemental instruction and were implemented by 21

colleges. Advising was the next most popular strategy implemented by 19 colleges.

Student success courses, learning communities, and new student orientations were

implemented at similar levels by 18, 13, and 19 colleges, respectively.

Table 10

Strategy Type

Strategy type	Percentage of strategies implemented (N = 174)
Advising	16
Curricular reform	14
Learning communities	10
Orientations	9
Success courses	11
Tutoring and supplemental instruction	24
Other strategies	16

Developmental education was a major focus for strategy development.

Developmental education includes precollege level courses in reading, writing, and

math. Students who are not college-ready place into these courses. Approximately 70

percent of students who place into developmental course work will not attain a degree

or certificate within 8 years of entering college (Vitale & Schmeiser, 2006). Round 1

colleges identified developmental course work as a major barrier to student success.

Half of the instructional and student service interventions included students who place

into developmental education courses as a target group.

Strategies addressing race and equity issues. Most of the Round 1 colleges

have completed or committed to the first step of working toward equitable student

outcomes by disaggregating their student progression data by race and income. By

disaggregating their student data colleges are able to identify achievement gaps, areas

of needed intervention, and eventually close the gaps. Thirteen Round 1 community colleges implemented strategies directly related to racial and economic equity. Six of the 13 colleges created mentoring programs for their men of color. African American, Hispanic, and Native American males across the Round 1 colleges had lowest student success rate. The mentoring programs were designed to provide men a sense of connection to the colleges and role models of successful men of color at the college or from the community.

For example, the Durham Technical Community College found that their African American male persistence rate was 10 percent lower than other student groups and their graduation rate was one-third lower. To address the challenges and barriers to success of their African American males, the college implemented a minority male leadership initiative entitled *Visions*. The purpose of Visions is to provide opportunities for men who do not have the academic skills to be successful in college, the monetary resources to be financially stable, the presence of a positive role model to help develop leadership potential, and an encouraging and positive social network to promote success. The initiative provides a multifaceted student engagement model that encourages the participation of minority men. Visions attracts men by providing intrusive academic advising in a weekly group discussion format, fostering the artistic development of talented students through a jazz ensemble, offering financial support through scholarships and job placement services, tutoring kids at a local elementary school, and expanding academic opportunities by visiting local universities. The Visions program encourages the men to utilize the resources available at the college and to

seek help when needed. The president and senior leadership have made addressing equity issues in relation to student success a key priority for their institution.

Another example is the *Black Male Achievers* program at Tallahassee Community College. The Black Male Achievers program is designed to help African American males stay in college and graduate. The program offers a variety of academic and student services, along with personal enrichment activities to advance intellectual and personal growth of their students. The Black Male Achievers program sponsors activities that promote student engagement and academic achievement. The program has hosted a Tuskegee Airman presentation, and completed service projects to facilitate student bonding and a connection to campus. For many of the Round 1 colleges their desire to address achievement gaps did not translate into strategic focus on closing achievement gaps.

Lift all boats. Overall Round 1 colleges did not create interventions or strategies that specifically targeted achievement gaps by race. Instead, colleges focused on interventions and strategies designed to promote the success of all their students. A few of the colleges developed indirect strategies to address racial/ethnic gaps through faculty/staff development and hiring practices. A president at a Texas college shared,

> We look at it more as raising all boats. You have enough diversity in the arenas where you are doing your work. It's looking at the levels and saying how do we keep these students and make them more successful. (Interview 171)

Many administrators were uncomfortable targeting services or resources to one student group because of the potential benefit of those services to other students with similar needs, perception of caring about or promoting one group of students' success over another, alienating targeted students, and limitations in how they can use state and

other funding to support student success efforts. An administrator at a Florida college illustrates these concerns by sharing:

> African American males as a cohort are performing below other groups. We looked at this data and saw the same things that have been recognized nationwide. However, we did not decide to focus on a particular group. Instead, we have followed a 'rising tide lifts all boats' philosophy. We cannot focus on one group [especially a racial group] because of political factors, and it is also not the right thing to do. We are not in a position to withhold services from one so that they can focus them on another. (Interview 37)

Evaluation and Measurement

Colleges' evaluation efforts are a key component of the data informed decision-making process. An evaluation plan is an essential component that is most useful when it is in place before implementation of strategies, policies, or curriculum changes. These plans help determine the extent to which interventions have led to an increase in student success and aid in decision making around current and future changes. Executing an evaluation plan was a challenge to numerous Round 1 colleges.

Approximately half of the Round 1 colleges had developed concrete plans to evaluate the effectiveness of their interventions on student outcomes. These colleges were also able to use their data analysis to deepen their understanding of student progression and outcomes, identify strategies for improving student success, and track their progress in promoting student success and eliminating achievement gaps. The colleges utilized different tactics to use data to advance the development and evaluation of strategies. Many colleges used data to identify target groups and establish focus groups to determine which policies and programs should be put forth. For example, South Texas College used qualitative data derived from focus groups to examine its student success initiatives. These data, along with student outcome data, led to

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changes to their advising process at South Texas College. Other colleges used data

derived from piloting student success programs at their institution to determine which

strategies should be implemented at full scale, and their potential effectiveness. For

example, Tidewater Community College (TCC) piloted its *FOCUS* orientation program

to determine if it was successful in increasing the number of students enrolling in the

student success courses during their first semester. The FOCUS orientation was

piloted with first generation students, targeting those most in need of college

knowledge. They found that students who participated in the FOCUS orientation

program were more likely to remain enrolled at TCC in future semesters and enrolled in

student success courses in higher numbers during their first semester compared to

students who did not participate in the orientation program. Houston Community

College (HCC) also used data from a piloted student success course to evaluate its

student success programs and policies. HCC's evaluation plan included data tracking

for its student success courses, guided studies courses, and learning communities.

These data were disaggregated by race and gender to determine how effective these

programs had been and which groups they had the most impact on. Both quantitative

and qualitative data have informed colleges' refinement and scale up of initiatives.

Scorecards: Tracking and Communicating Progress

To ensure that the results from evaluations have a positive impact on student

outcomes, colleges need to communicate the findings of evaluations broadly; and

convene groups of faculty, staff, and administrators to review the results and discuss

the implications for improving institutional policy and practice. The use of data-driven

decision-making and strategy development is an ongoing process for colleges that have institutionalized their student success efforts.

Twenty-three percent of Round 1 colleges are using educational/institutional scorecards to track their progress in promoting student success and closing achievement gaps. The creation of scorecards and data dashboards allows for access to comprehensive data on student success. In general, the scorecard measures where the college is in terms of established targets by allowing colleges to track students' achievement longitudinally from semester to semester, and to examine indicators of overall institutional performance, including student persistence, course completion, graduation, and evaluate interventions. Educational scorecards offer a visual display of the most important information needed to achieve specific objectives. It is designed to fit entirely on a single screen so that outcomes are easily monitored at a glance. The scorecards have helped colleges:

- Identify and prioritize institutional goals for student success.
- Establish standards for accountability to these goals.
- Track and monitor key outcomes over time.
- Communicate clearly and openly about institutional priorities and progress.

Guilford Technical Community College, South Texas College, and Danville Community College are just a few institutions that sought to use this process as a way to facilitate data analysis among faculty and staff. Guilford Technical Community College (GTCC) implemented a curriculum scorecard at both the college (institutional) and academic department levels. This scorecard was created by the learning evidence committee to measure student success rates throughout the academic year. The

scorecard also indicates the effectiveness of GTCC on student success initiatives. Additionally, the institutional scorecard measures aspects such as graduation and retention rates, course completion, and developmental progression. A scorecard was also created for each department at GTCC. The departmental scorecard measures retention rates, and graduation rates for each department. At the divisional level the data gathered for the scorecard were intended to recognize strengths and weaknesses of student success initiatives. The data used for the scorecards allows GTCC the ability to assess how prepared their students are for college-level coursework. Also, these data are used to address efforts aimed at creating new programs to increase student success.

The data dashboard implemented at South Texas College was created by the information and reporting team as a way to monitor institutional indicators such as enrollment, student progression, admissions, and student completion rates. The data dashboard provides current information on student learning outcomes for faculty and staff. With the implementation of the data dashboard, data are available each day for faculty, staff, and administrators at South Texas College that assists in the examination of key factors related to student success. The success of the data dashboard has led to expansion efforts in order to address several other data needs of the college.

Danville Community College's (DCC) scorecard is a valuable tool that has helped keep the college focused on its priorities and provides a powerful communication of a dense collection of information at a glance. It provides a visual representation of the colleges' core values and progress towards priority goals. The college uses the scorecard to track five specific goals: developmental math outcomes, persistence and

retention rates, cohort grade point averages, graduation rates, and student success course completion. The college tracks student data disaggregated by race, gender, and income, which informs the college's efforts to narrow achievement gaps by identifying where gaps have narrowed or widened over time. Outcomes are reported in simple nontechnical language—*above target*, *at target*, *below target,* and *far below target*—making it accessible to the entire campus community. The educational scorecard has emerged as an important tool to help DCC develop and communicate evidence-based, institution-wide goals for student success.

The tool is used to track student success at very specific milestones and to identify areas where DCC can reduce barriers that impede progress through college. College presidents are using the scorecard for strategic planning and to provide concise information to board members. The educational scorecard is an evidence-based tool that is helping colleges expand their focus on student success institution wide.

Achieving Equity

Round 1 colleges have committed to an institutional focus on equity and student success. For these colleges, the concepts of equity and student success are inseparable—inequities are alleviated by improved student outcomes (Rutschow et al., 2011). The colleges' increased attention to student outcomes data and changes to policies and practices are expected to lead to improved student outcomes and eventually the elimination of inequities thus achieving equity (Achieving the Dream, 2009). Since making a commitment to focus on equity the Round 1 colleges are seeing an increase in equitable outcomes and reduction of achievement gaps on some of their intermediary goals like completion of developmental education courses and student

persistence from semester to semester. Colleges have not experienced the same level of gains or improvement in graduation and transfer rates. They have enhanced their institutions through data-driven decision making, numerous interventions aimed at increasing student achievement and student-centered policies, and more efficient systems for monitoring those efforts (Rutschow et al., 2011). The Round 1 colleges are more aware of the inequities that they need to address and have identified student success as an institutional priority. Improving institution-wide indicators of equity remains a challenge. A recent report published by MDRC[2], *Moving Ahead With Institutional Change: Lessons From the First Round of Achieving the Dream Community Colleges* (Mayer et al., 2014) concluded: "The Round 1 colleges have demonstrated that, though change can occur at the institutional level, substantially improving institution-wide student outcomes is much harder than was envisioned at the start of the initiative" (p. 46).

Research into organizational change, specifically change that is associated with the delivery of education, has shown repeatedly that time is needed for the organizational restructuring to be manifested in changes in student outcomes (Payzant & Horan, 2007; Quint, 2006). Improving student outcomes and closing achievement gaps takes time. Institutional change, changes to student outcomes, and achieving equity all takes time. As a president at a Virginia college shared:

> What you have to do is make the shifts at the college wide level and don't expect huge changes quickly. You'll find the changes incremental so you have to keep at it for a long time. So patience and dedication are needed. (Interview 285)

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[2] MDRC is one the partner organizations within the Achieving the Dream. MDRC is primarily responsible for evaluating the initiative.

Another president at a Florida college shared, "The needle has not moved as much as I thought it would. We have not made the quantum leaps as result of the energies we put into changing student performance" (Interview 30).

Improving institution-wide indicators of student success remains a challenge; however, Round 1 colleges have made important strides in improving student outcomes. Twenty-seven percent of colleges experienced narrowing or closing of at least one achievement gap during their participation in Achieving the Dream (Rutschow et al., 2011). The Achieving the Dream initiative highlights the colleges in its *Points of Pride* (2011) publication:

- Alamo College improved the success rate in developmental math for first-time in college from 48 percent to 55 percent.

- Danville Community College dramatically increased the percentage of students of color (by 22 percent) and low-income students (20 percent) that advanced from developmental to college-level math.

- El Paso Community College significantly decreased the number of students requiring developmental education, including a 24 percent decrease in developmental reading and a 37 percent decrease in developmental writing coupled with a 15 percent increase in students entering college-ready English.

- Guilford Technical Community College virtually eliminated its 11 percent persistence gap between African-American and Caucasian males in developmental education.

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- Patrick Henry Community College reduced its attrition rate from 26 percent to just 5 percent for students in classes with Active Cooperative Learning.

- South Texas College has improved its three year graduation rates for first-time degree seeking students from 12 percent to 16 percent.

- Valencia Community College drastically narrowed the achievement gap between African-American and Caucasian students from 13 percent to 5 percent and eliminated the gap between Hispanic and Caucasian students.

Patterns Across Colleges

The summary finding tables for each research questions were used in determining which colleges demonstrated a strong, moderate, and low commitment to equity. In Table 11 the colleges are listed by their commitment to equity. Seven colleges (27 percent) demonstrate a strong commitment to equity through their vision, use of data, strategy implementation and evaluation, and tracking of institutional student success performance measures. These colleges mostly[3] received "H," heavily discussed, for the indicators in the summary tables for Research Questions 1 and 2, and had equity focused strategies and evaluation plans. Further, these colleges consistently focused on data and their implications on equity and student success. Eleven colleges (42 percent) demonstrated a moderate commitment to equity. These colleges received a mixture of mainly "H," heavily discussed, "M," moderately discussed, for the indicators in the summary tables for Research Questions 1 and 2, and had a mixture of having and not having equity focused strategies and evaluation plans. Eight colleges (31 percent) demonstrated a low commitment to equity. These

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[3] The colleges received H on more than half the indicators in summary tables for Research Questions 1 and 2 (eight indicators).

Table 11

College Commitment to Equity

Strong commitment	Moderate commitment	Low commitment
•Broward College	•Brookhaven College	•Alamo Community College District
•Durham Technical Community College	•Central New Mexico Community College	•Coastal Bend College
•Guilford Technical Community College	•Danville Community College	•Martin College
•Hillsborough Community College	•El Paso Community College	•Mountain Empire Community College
•South Texas College	•Houston Community College System	•New Mexico State University-Dona Ana
•Tallahassee Community College	•Patrick Henry Community College	•Southwestern Indian Polytechnic Institute
•Valencia Community College	•Paul D. Camp Community College	•University of New Mexico-Gallup Campus
	•Southwest Texas Junior College	•Wayne Community College
	•Tidewater Community College	
N = 7 (27%)	*N* = 11 (42%)	*N* = 8 (31%)

colleges received a mixture of all the ratings, from heavily discussed to rarely discussed for the indicators in the summary tables for Research Questions 1 and 2. Additionally, they are generally not implementing equity focused strategies and do not have evaluation plans.

The strong commitment and moderate commitment colleges are more similar than they are different in terms of student demographics, size, and location. The colleges in the moderate commitment range are either not implementing equity focused strategies or they do not have an evaluation plan or some other component related to data-driven decision making. All but one of the colleges within the strong and moderate categories (exception Paul D. Camp Community College) have been recognized by the Achieving the Dream initiative as leader colleges. To be designated an Achieving the Dream Leader college, institutions must present evidence of increases in student achievement on at least one measure over 3 or more years. The documentation of increases in student achievement should be in an area where the college has sought to improve overall student success or close gaps in achievement among student groups (Achieving the Dream, 2009). Leader colleges, who also have demonstrated commitment to improving student success and equity by creating a culture of evidence at their institutions, are beginning to see improvement in their student outcomes and have institutionalized the student-centered model and principles promoted by Achieving the Dream (2012).

The colleges that have made a low commitment have experienced significant challenges in using data. These colleges are committed to the success of their students; however, their decisions are not guided by data, and interventions and

strategies designed to improve student outcomes are not being evaluated. Six of the

eight low commitment colleges are small colleges with enrollments ranging from 597 to

under 3,000. These institutions did not have the institutional research capacity to

support the ongoing use of data-driven decision-making. Some of these institutions,

due to small staff and faculty already fulfilling multiple roles at their institutions, viewed

the institutional change promoted by Achieving the Dream as a burden. An

administrator from a Texas college shared, "People call it: 'Achieving the Nightmare'"

(Interview 163). While other colleges were more proud of what they have

accomplished despite the struggle. An Achieving the Dream coordinator at a North

Carolina college indicated, "Although we struggled we really come along way"

(Interview #141). A North Carolina college president provided perspective to the

experience of small colleges within the initiative sharing,

> With this whole movement many of us smaller colleges were not ready to tackle
> the data. Data was [sic] foreign to us. We just were not ready, we still are not
> ready. We do not have the expertise in data. It is tough. It puts us one step
> behind. (Interview 159)

Additionally, the majority of the low commitment colleges have homogenous student

populations, primarily serving Hispanic or Native American students with high levels of

poverty.

Summary of Findings

Leadership from the top, as well as buy-in from the bottom, has been the

consistent combination for institutional change amongst the Round 1 colleges. The

Round 1 colleges that had both strong leadership guiding their institutions' commitment

to equity, and vision for student success and broad engagement from faculty and staff,

experienced higher levels of institutionalization of student success interventions and

reported a paradigm shift within the college overall. A president shared how his

institution has changed:

> AtD has been a piece of a morphing into student success, and student success is operationalized. It's becoming embedded in the institution's culture. It's a cultural shift as well. Honest dialogue about student success would not have happened 5 years ago. Now they can talk about how developmental math is different, and they get more at-risk students in online courses, which is contributing to a higher drop-out rate. That then led to the question of how to make students understand from the front end that online is no less of a commitment of time, etc. That sort of conversation would have been offensive before. It's not that at all—it's truly collegial debate and discussion going on at the campuses. (Interview 327)

The cultural shift that most of the Round 1 community colleges experienced is evident

not only in the use of data to inform decision making or the offering of interventions or

increased student supports but in the institutions' policies and approaches. As part of

the colleges' transformation into student or learner-centered institutions they are closely

examining their policies and practices to ensure they are not creating or enabling

barriers to student success. For example, the colleges are making interventions like

participation in student orientation and/or student success courses mandatory, creating

better alignment between the times classes are offered and the public transportation

schedule, offering required courses during multiple time slots (day and evening), and

discontinuing late registration for classes once the semester has begun. These

institutions are closely examining their policies and practices to ensure they are not

creating or enabling barriers to student success.

The achievement gaps in Round 1 colleges among different demographic groups

are persistent and significant. Efforts to improve student completion should be targeted

at strategies that hold the greatest promise of changing educational outcomes.

Importantly, Round 1 colleges are not exclusively data-driven in their strategies. Round

1 colleges overall have indicated a preference for focusing on strategies and interventions that promote student success for all students versus a targeted approach based upon achievement gaps. While data has played an important role from the diagnosis to the implementation and institutionalization of their student success efforts, selected strategies are not always data driven due to institutional discomfort in developing targeted strategies.

Conclusion

The primary findings of this analysis are the following:

- Leadership at the president and senior administrator level is necessary for the conceptualization and communication of an institutional vision of equity.

- Once leadership direction and commitment has been established, broad engagement across the institution is necessary for implementation of institutional changes needed to achieve equity.

- Improving student success was defined as the means for achieving equity by Round 1 Achieving the Dream colleges.

- It is vitally important to have the institutional research capacity that allows for analysis of student progression data, examination of achievement gaps through the disaggregation of student outcome data, evaluation of efforts implemented to improve equitable student outcomes and the overall culture of data informed decision making.

- Round 1 Achieving the Dream colleges are more comfortable with the "lift all boats" approach to student success versus a targeted approach based on data disaggregation and achievement gaps.

With a conscious concern for students of color and low-income students, Round 1 colleges are encouraged to examine not only the students themselves, but also the institutions that educate them. By working within a framework that examines many aspects of the community college educational structure while promoting a data-driven, culture of evidence orientation, community colleges can aggressively and comprehensively engage in the achievement of equity through student success. To implement equity, it is important for community colleges to respond to outcome disparities on an institutional level by committing to the goal of equity. Recognizing inequity is the first step toward achieving equity. Chapter 5 discusses the implications of these findings in relation to the theoretical framework of social equity, implications for public administration and policy more broadly, and concludes with identifying areas for future research.

CHAPTER 5: IMPLICATIONS OF FINDINGS, RECOMMENDATIONS, AND CONCLUSION

Equal treatment would be giving every student a pair of shoes; equitable treatment is buying every student shoes that fit. Eileen Baccus, Achieving the Dream Coach

In fewer than 10 years, 65 percent of all jobs in the American economy will require postsecondary education and training beyond high school (Carnevale, Smith, & Strohl, 2010). Inequity is hardwired into the American education system, as seen in the importance income levels and race play in determining high school, college, and long-term success. The postsecondary system of most relevance in regard to access, remediation, and equity of student outcomes is the community college system (Horn & Nevill, 2006). Because community college students are much more likely to be nontraditional (low-income, minority, older, parents, employed full or part-time, immigrants, etc.), they are more susceptible to the problems caused by inequities.

Community colleges as open access public institutions have a powerful opportunity to address these inequities. The pressure to improve student outcomes has intensified at community colleges, where only 40 percent of students who began their studies in 2007 had completed a degree or certificate by 2013 (NCES, 2013). This study examined the efforts of Round 1 Achieving the Dream community colleges, as public institutions, to promote equity and eliminate achievement gaps for low-income, first-generation, and students of color.

Using a case study approach, the following research questions were used to guide this study:

- How are Achieving the Dream Round 1 community colleges conceptualizing a vision of equity?

- What is the role of data in helping Achieving the Dream Round 1 community colleges become equity focused?

- How is equity implemented, measured, and achieved by Achieving the Dream Round 1 community colleges?

This study was designed to understand what Round 1 community colleges were able to accomplish utilizing the Achieving the Dream Model to pursue student success and equity through a culture of evidence. To explore "how" community colleges implement policies, programs, and interventions to promote equity in student success outcomes. A content analysis of 333 interviews across the 26 Round 1 Achieving the Dream community colleges examined the colleges'

- commitment to equity,

- promotion of student success,

- use of disaggregated student outcome data in their decision making,

- measurement and accountability for equitable student outcomes, and

- institutional transformation and cultural shifts.

The purpose of this chapter is to relate the findings of this study to the concepts and theoretical approaches discussed earlier in this dissertation. In this chapter, the implications of the study's key findings are discussed in relation to the theoretical

framework of social equity. Additionally, limitations of the findings, implications for

public administration and policy, and areas of future research are discussed.

Connecting the Findings to Social Equity

This research focuses on the access and outcomes dimensions of social equity.

Community colleges are public organizations that provide open access to higher

education and workforce training. However, achievement gaps exist in educational

outcomes of community colleges. For example, low-income, first-generation, and

students of color are not progressing or completing at the same rate. To implement

social equity, it is important for community colleges to respond to outcome disparities on

an institutional level by committing to the goal of equity. Social equity provides both the

theoretical and analytical framework for this study. "Social equity is a commitment to

attack disparity and advance equality for persons in groups that have been (or in the

future might be) subject to treatment that is inferior, prejudicial or hostile" (Johnson &

Svara, 2011, p. 281). Guy and McCandless (2012) define social equity as:

> (1) procedural fairness, meaning due process, equal protections and civil rights;
> (2) equity in the availability of services and benefits; (3) equity in the process of
> providing services and benefits; (4) equal level of outcomes for all groups; and
> (5) a guarantee of a place at the table to express views on policy choices and
> service delivery. (p. 512)

The utilization of social equity allows for the assessment of the public good

provided by community colleges and to determine their ability to serve as democratic

agents of opportunity, in terms of access and outcomes. The Round 1 Achieving the

Dream colleges utilized the initiative's 5-stage process (see Figure 3) that is grounded

in continuous improvement methodologies, emphasizing the power of feedback loops

that inform the innovation, review, and improvement cycle on an ongoing basis. The

process begins by asking practitioners to commit to equity through improving student outcomes, to use data to prioritize actions, to engage stakeholders in developing an action plan, to enact processes that guide implementation and evaluation of improvements, and to establish a culture of continuous improvement (Rutschow et al., 2011). The key findings from the Round 1 Achieving the Dream colleges and their efforts to become equity minded and focused institutions are best summarized by utilizing the framework outlined in Chapter 2 (see Table 2). Gooden's (2008) 3-step process of ready, aim, and fire is used as the framework to analyze the key findings:

- Step 1 Ready: Data
    - It is vitally important to have the institutional research capacity that allows for analysis of student progression data, examination of achievement gaps through the disaggregation of student outcome data, evaluation of efforts implemented to improve equitable student outcomes and the overall culture of data informed decision making.
    - Eighty-one percent of Round 1 Achieving the Dream colleges identified achievement gaps through the disaggregation of student outcome data.
    - Sixty-nine percent of the Round 1 Achieving the Dream colleges used data as an ongoing tool in their efforts to achieve equity and promote student success.
- Step 2 Aim: Committed Leadership
    - Leadership at the president and senior administrator level is necessary for the conceptualization and communication of an institutional vision of equity.

- Once leadership direction and commitment has been established, broad engagement across the institution is necessary for implementation of institutional changes needed to achieve equity.
  - Improving student success was defined as the means for achieving equity by Round 1 Achieving the Dream colleges.
- Step 3 Fire: Action
  - Round 1 Achieving the Dream colleges implemented 174 instructional and student service strategies with the goal of increasing student success.
  - A majority of strategies implemented were related to developmental education. More low-income, first generation and students of color place into developmental classes than other student groups (Gardenhire-Crooks, Collado, Martin, & Castro, 2010)
  - Round 1 Achieving the Dream colleges are more comfortable with the "*lift all boats*" approach to student success versus a targeted approach based on data disaggregation and achievement gaps.
  - Half of the Round 1 Achieving the Dream colleges implemented strategies directly related to racial and economic equity.

The key findings are discussed further in terms of the current literature and research in the area of social equity.

Step 1 Ready: Data and Achievement Gaps

"Equity is not only a matter of social justice or morality: It is an economic necessity" (Treuhaft et al., 2011, p. 4). In today's economy, education and economic opportunity are inseparable. The problem of closing the college education gap and

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achieving equitable outcomes for historically under-represented students is a problem of institutional responsibility and performance, rather than exclusively a problem related to student accountability, motivation, and academic preparation (Bauman et al., 2005). Community colleges need to heighten their awareness of the problems associated with structural inequities within their campuses in order to create more equitable conditions for all students. For community colleges to dismantle structural inequities, they must be conscious of race, gender, class, and power biases. Many structural factors related to race, gender, class, and power are influenced by an organization's overall perception of justice.

In order for Round 1 Achieving the Dream colleges to understand their institutional performance in terms of equity and student success, they need to be able to answer the important questions defined by H. George Frederickson (2010), a leader within social equity scholarship: "For whom is the organization well managed? For whom is the organization efficient? For whom is the organization economical? For whom are public services more or less fairly delivered?" (p. xv). In order to answer these questions Round 1 Achieving the Dream colleges needed data to:

- Inform colleges which students are at most risk of not succeeding.
- Indicate why specific student groups are not succeeding.
- Show which interventions have worked or not worked.
- Determine the extent to which intervention have led to increases in student success.
- Create and track equity performance measures for the institution.

Based on the findings from this research, Round 1 Achieving the Dream colleges have used data to create a culture of evidence, to better understand student progression patterns, to evaluate their interventions, and ultimately improve equity that aligns with the literature.

Scheurich and Skrla (2003) argue that data needs to be analyzed by specific student groups, so that an overall data picture does not hide low subgroup performance of any one group. In 2004, Skrla et al. again assert that the use of data are essential to address inequities shown when data are disaggregated. Most of the Achieving the Dream Round 1 colleges initially disaggregated their student outcome data to identify inequities. Their data were mainly disaggregated by the following student groups: first-generation, low-income, and students of color. Some colleges also disaggregated their data by level of student preparation for college work using placement scores. These data were used to inform efforts to improve student outcomes and close achievement gaps. However, the use of disaggregated data in diagnosis of inequities did not translate to the ongoing use of disaggregated data in intervention evaluations or the institutions' ongoing performance. Without appropriate measures, aggregate results will mask deeper, structural inequities in student outcomes and success, and the system will not change in the ways envisioned by the community colleges.

Step 2 Aim: Leadership

Embracing a culture of equity requires institutional change. Both faculty and staff want to have a voice in that change. Community colleges embracing principles of organizational justice increase employee commitment and buy-in in times of change and transition (Folger & Cropanzano, 1998). Addressing the inequities within the

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American educational system takes leadership. Leaders cannot and should not accept inequitable achievement as a given (Scheurich et al., 2000), especially for students who face multiple forms of oppression and marginalization in the existing educational system (Gerwirtz, 2006). Lopez et al. (2006) define leadership for equity as bold, courageous actions that eliminate inequities and reduce the achievement gap. Most of the Round 1 Achieving the Dream presidents and senior administrators are committed to improving student success at their institutions. They are demonstrating this commitment through their conceptualization of equity, leading the institutional change needed to become student centered, using data-driven analysis for decision making at all levels of the college, and supporting the budgetary needs of interventions designed to improve student outcomes.

Scheurich and Skrla (2003) identify essential characteristics of leadership for equity and excellence: "(a) a strong ethical or moral core focused on equity and excellence; (b) a belief that improvement in equity and excellence is possible; and (c) never quitting in the insistence on working towards equity and excellence" (p. 143). The Round 1 Achieving the Dream presidents and senior administrators have chosen to serve at community colleges, not at other institutions of higher education, because they believe in their mission and in the students they serve. A Florida president shared these sentiments, "I love the challenge. I do not want to be a 4-year school. We have not finished this part of our mission. I want to engage the real problem—inequities" (Interview 30).

Step 3 Fire/Action: Lift All Boats

Achievement gaps are frequently symptoms of structural inequities that need to be assessed and addressed at an institutional level, not an individual level, in order to work toward equity and achieve student success. Structural inequity provides a necessary lens for identifying the institutional and systemic barriers that impede student success. The majority of the interventions implemented by Round 1 Achieving the Dream colleges were designed to promote the success of all their students instead of tailored or targeted interventions designed specifically to close achievement gaps for first-generation, low-income, and students of color. Despite analyzing the data that indicated which student groups were not succeeding, there was an overall discomfort with targeted interventions by the colleges. Social equity scholar, Mitchell Rice (2004) notes, "Social equity can also be a value commitment that may involve implementing targeted programs as a way of bringing about equality of results (outcomes) as opposed to input equality—that is, treating every resident, consumer or client the same" (p. 144). More needs to be done to support colleges in implementing targeted interventions based upon identified inequities by student group. This discomfort is not limited to community colleges but experienced more broadly in higher education as indicated by recent Supreme Court cases.

Concluding Summary

Norman-Major (2011) recognizes "that the payoffs for social equity are often long term" (p. 240). This is a reality that many of the Round 1 Achieving the Dream colleges have faced, it takes time to see changes in graduation rates and transfer rates. However, they were able to realize improvement in student outcomes and closing of

achievement gaps when measuring intermediary outcomes (i.e., student persistence or completion of developmental course work). Measuring short-term outcomes for equity requires "proper data collection, the setting of benchmarks, and use of program evaluation" (Norman-Major, 2011 p. 250). Twenty-three percent of Round 1 Achieving the Dream colleges created educational/institutional scorecards and were able to capture their short-term progress and understand where they were relative to their overall equity performance goals.

It is important to note that using data in this way was not a traditional practice for many of the Round 1 community colleges prior to their participation in Achieving the Dream. Using data in this manner was motivated by their participation in Achieving the Dream and required institutional change as did all their efforts to be equity minded and improve student success (Gonzalez, 2009). The use of data has helped facilitate equity-driven shifts in thinking, planning, and acting and promotes institutional change so that community colleges better support the most vulnerable students in succeeding.

Implications for Policy on Access, Outcomes, and Equity

Education is often referred to as the "great equalizer" and has been integral in providing access to social mobility and the American Dream (Gooden, 2014; Hochschild, 1995). President Obama's American Graduation Initiative (Obama, 2009) has refocused higher education from access to completion, emphasizing the latter as the definitive measure of success for community colleges. The pressure to improve student outcomes has intensified, especially at community colleges where only 40 percent of students who began their studies in 2007 had completed a degree or certificate by 2013 (Shapiro, Dundar, Ziskin, Yuan, & Harrell, 2013). "Traditionally

focused on increasing *access* to postsecondary education, particularly for low-income students, community colleges are now turning more attention to improving the academic *success* of their students" (Rutschow et al., 2011, p. xi).

The Achieving the Dream Round 1 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. The work of community colleges is intimately connected to their position as publicly funded institutions (Dougherty, 1994). Community colleges are distinctly public institutions, beholden to multiple constituents, including legislators, the business community, and families. They are often cast as a middle-ground between K-12 education and higher education (Hanson, 2008).

The actions of community colleges and their students are also framed by an emphasis on college-going rather than college completion. Since the mid-20th century, governments and philanthropies have played an active role in promoting access to higher education, but until recently most paid far less attention to whether students finished college. This emphasis is reflected in how community colleges are funded. Funding formulas tend to be based on enrollment. This approach rewards colleges for getting students in the door, but not for making sure those students succeed (Goldrick-Rab, Harris, & Trostel, 2009). Many of the democratizing opportunities provided by community colleges are diminished in the eyes of policy makers by inadequate rates of success.

The Achieving the Dream initiative recognized the importance of creating more systemic change initiatives that bring policy makers and practitioners together in work across the state and local levels to improve access, equity, and completion as attainable goals for underserved students. The initiative invested in state policy teams based upon the locations of the Round 1 colleges: Florida, North Carolina, New Mexico, Texas, and Virginia. In addition to supporting systemic change that aligns institutional efforts to achieve equity at the state policy level, there needs to be an emphasis on the institutional and structural inequities that create barriers to student success and achievement of equity.

Institutional and Structural Inequities

Historically, when solutions have been explored to correct inequitable outcomes in higher education, the focus has most often been on the shortcomings of the individual student (Barajas & Pierce, 2001). This external way of thinking influences the support provided to first-generation, low-income, and students of color, and could ultimately serve to reinforce the problems of inequity rather than correcting them. Achieving equitable student outcomes and the promotion of student success requires an institutional and structural focus by community colleges, and the state and federal policies that govern them. According to Bensimon (2005 a,b), the responsibility for creating equity in higher education rests with public administrators. This internal way of thinking focuses on institutional practices and policies, rather than on the individual student. Figure 7 provides a visual representation to shift in focus from individual student behavior to change at the institutional and structural levels. In order for community colleges to practice and achieve equity in their student outcomes there has

Figure 7. Shifting focus to achieve equity.

to be a paradigm shift that views inequities from an institutional structural perspective. Structural inequity provides a necessary lens for identifying the institutional and systemic barriers that impede student success.

Policies are important in that they are a major focus in aligning resources and providing incentives to achieve desired outcomes (Shulock & Boilard, 2007). By systematically uncovering policy and program-related problems that get in the way of student access and success, policy makers and practitioners are able to work collaboratively to navigate the kinds of complex questions that are raised when communities seek equity for all of their members (Stone, 2002). This type of focus assumes that mechanisms for evaluation are in place to determine existing barriers that may not be readily apparent. A systems perspective can highlight the links between cause and effect, but only if data sets are constructed to allow for systematic analysis and use. The question of how to maximize access and also increase completion is of paramount importance for students who historically have been underserved by higher education (Bragg & Durham, 2012).

Equity Performance Accountability

Social equity is intrinsic for the promotion of student success within community colleges. The limitations of data systems on all levels (federal, state, and local) impede the assessment of student outcomes, and they also point to the complexity of identifying measures of student success in the community college environment. If policy makers and institutional leaders are unable to find the right measures and also disaggregate those measures by student subgroups, it will not be possible to promote and sustain access policies that are aligned with equitable outcomes (Baldwin, Bensimon, Dowd, & Kleiman, 2011).

Just as student progression data was important in the efforts of the Round 1 Achieving the Dream colleges, data have a key role in promoting equity on a larger scale. By implementing *equity performance accountability* measures, colleges can address changes needed at the institutional level as well as identify the structural support needed from state and federal policies. "Equitable outcomes can be measured by studying a number of key indicators within the institution including graduation rates, degree attainment across majors, and honors and awards" (Bensimon, 2005b, p. 5). The design of *equity performance accountability* can be achieved by mandating extended analyses of current indicators to look at outcomes by race, gender, and income. Figure 8 provides a formula for creating an equity index, which helps benchmark progress (Bensimon, 2004).

Figure 8. Calculating equity index.
Adapted from "Diversity Scorecard," by E. M. Bensimon, 2004.

The equity index can be calculated for both intermediary outcomes (tracking

developmental education coursework completion) as well as institutional outcomes

(graduation or transfer). Below is an example comparing a colleges' enrollment to its 4-

year transfer by race to create an equity index for Latino students (Table 12).

Table 12

Community College A: FTE Enrollment vs. Transfers to 4-year

FTE Enrollment		Reference Population	Transfers to 4-year		Educational Outcome
Latino	9,375		Latino	1,310	
White	5,450		White	1,380	
Asian/Pac Islander	1,345		Asian/Pac Islander	570	
African American	985		African American	210	
Other	210		Other	60	
Total	17,365		Total	3,530	

Using the data provided in Table 12 the equity index[4] is .69. Table 13, provides an

equity index interpretation. An equity index of .69 represents low equity performance.

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[4] Equity Index = (1,310/3,530)/ (9,375/17,365) = .69

Table 13

Equity as a Measure of Performance

Performance Level	Equity Index Value	Description
High Performance	Greater than or equal to 1	At or above equity
Medium-High Performance	$0.85 \leq$ Equity Index ≤ 0.99	Almost at equity
Medium-Low Performance	$0.70 \leq$ Equity Index < 0.85	Below equity
Low Performance	Equity Index < 0.70	Far below equity

Adapted from "Equity Scorecard," by E. M. Bensimon, 2004.

It is important for inequities in these areas to be identified since they limit the success of students and impede the achievement of their goals. *Equity performance accountability* has value in establishing equitable outcomes as a goal for higher education.

Summary of Limitations of Findings

This is a qualitative study that relies primarily on secondary data analysis of field visits conducted as part of MDRC's evaluation work of Achieving the Dream Round 1 community colleges in Spring 2009. The findings from this research are based on the content analysis of 333 interviews across the 26 Achieving the Dream Round 1 community colleges. The findings are limited by the scope of the research. The findings are based on self-reported information and may overstate what colleges are doing in terms of equity. Another limitation is the sole focus on community colleges and their efforts, not considering the larger systemic context of the state system each community college is governed by. The study limits its analysis to those working within the institutions versus those being served by the institution (students). The lack of student perception of equity and feedback on college's efforts to increase student success is a key limitation of using secondary data analysis for this study. Another limitation of the research is generalizability of the results. The findings of this research are not generalizable to all community colleges or even all community colleges

participating in Achieving the Dream. By utilizing a case study approach the focus is narrow and limited to that of the 26 Round 1 community colleges. Even though these experiences are not generalizable, they still provide meaningful data on implementing equity by a public institution. Finally, the findings are limited by the focus on implementation efforts of the college with minimal data on outcomes.

Implications of Research to Public Administration

The concept or value of equity is one that permeates society, government, and the field of public administration (Frederickson, 2010; Johnson & Svara, 2011). Public institutions have long been concerned about efficiency, economy, and effectiveness. Social equity is the fourth pillar of public administration along with efficiency, economy, and effectiveness. Each of these pillars make up the theoretical foundation of public administration and outline principles of good governance (Svara & Brunet, 2004). Social equity offers a linkage between theory and values within the field of public administration (Frederickson, 2010). In a society where disparities of income, wealth, and access to opportunity continue to increase with no sign of abatement, it is important to understand how public institutions value social equity in access to services and outcomes. The findings of this study have significant implications for public administration:

- By adding to the scholarship of the *practice* of social equity. The scholarship on the practice of social equity is less developed than the scholarship defining equity both philosophically and theoretically and the identification of inequities (Gooden, 2008; Johnson & Svara, 2011).

- By defining and discussing *equity performance accountability* for public institutions utilizing community colleges as an example. The other pillars of public administration, efficiency, economy, and effectiveness have long defined measures for performance and accountability (Norman-Major, 2011; Wooldridge & Gooden, 2009).

Svara and Brunet (2004) describe social equity as the skeletal pillar of public administration. The skeletal pillar of social equity continues to be filled in by new scholarship, instruction, and creation of tools and guidance for practice (Gooden & Myers, 2004; Rice, 2004; Spriggs, 2004; Svara & Brunet, 2004). The findings from this study contribute to the continued filling in of the social equity pillar.

Areas for Future Research

The scholarship on social equity focuses on defining the concept, identifying the inequities that exist, and the limited scholarship on how social equity is achieved. This research is an important contribution to exploring public institutions' efforts to promote equity by exploring the experiences of Round 1 Achieving the Dream colleges. The focus of this research goes beyond the goal of equity to the measurement and understanding of what leads to forward movement toward equity and the closing of achievement gaps. The areas for future research are divided into two areas:

Community colleges: Research is needed to identify promising practices and policies that promote student success and the achievement of equity in student outcomes. There is a tendency in studies of community colleges to solely emphasize the constraints colleges face that stem from the many needs of their students. Research needs to focus on the identification of institutional barriers that impede

student success. Researchers and policy makers agree that improving rates of success among community college students is a top educational priority and key to reach national completion goals.

Practice of social equity: Additional research is needed on public institutions practicing equity. The goal is to create equity performance indicators that allow for measurement of short-term and long-term benefits of equity by any public institution. "Investments in social equity often fall prey to debates over what is the 'right or moral' thing for government to do versus what provides the best return on investment" (Norman-Major, 2011, p. 240). Investments in social equity should not be limited by lack of measures or defined concepts.

Conclusion

The community college is a portal of educational opportunity, individual development, economic power, and social mobility (Bailey & Morest, 2006). In today's economy, education and economic opportunity are inseparable. Education beyond high school is increasingly essential to people who want to earn a middle-class income, and community colleges play a crucial role in preparing individuals for careers and baccalaureate programs (USDOE, 2006). The pursuit of social equity within our public institutions and those that they serve is imperative to a nation that values equality (Frederickson, 2005). The ability of community colleges to improve the human capital of the individual, as well as the social capital of the community it serves, makes it an important goal to ensure that its services are provided in an equitable manner. It is imperative that community colleges serve as agents of equity. These institutions are public institutions designed to democratize the opportunity and access to higher

education. The pursuit of social equity within our public institutions and those that they

serve is imperative to a nation that values democratic ideal of equality.

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Appendix A
MDRC Field Visit Protocol

Achieving the Dream Wave 2 Implementation Research at Round 1 Colleges:

Overall Field Protocol

Last updated: January 12, 2009

Pre-site Visit Questions:
Management of Achieving the Dream/Basic College Information

NOTE: Some of these questions may be answered through earlier research/site visits, colleges' reports, etc. Also, many of the other questions in the larger protocol could be asked in a pre-site visit interview. In particular, we would suggest exploring the development of the individual strategies pre-site visit, as there are likely to be many strategies to learn about. The following is a suggestion for where to start with your pre-site visit protocols.

Interviewees: *Core Team Leader or other Core Team Member*

Management—Core/Data Team
1. How has the college managed Achieving the Dream?
    a. Did the college start with a Core Team and a Data Team? Do these teams still exist?
        i. Who is on the Core team? (*Top administrators? Developmental Ed/ESL faculty? Student services staff? External stakeholders? Students?*)
        ii. Was there turnover in the Core Team since AtDs inception? If so, how much? What contributed to the turnover?
        iii. Who is on the Data team? *(Top administrators? IR and IT staff? Student services staff? Faculty?)*
        iv. Was there turnover in the Data Team since AtD's inception? If so, how much? What contributed to the turnover?

Basic college information
2. Does the college have multiple campuses? If so, how has it organized AtD across the different campuses or colleges?
    a. Who at the other campuses has been involved in the Achieving the Dream? Is there anyone new that we should contact?

3. Does the college have the same president now as when it started in AtD? If not, how much turnover has there been since its inception?

4. How is the faculty organized (e.g., Is there a union?)?
    a. Who are the leaders in your faculty (that we should be interested in meeting with)? Which ones are involved/not involved in AtD?

5. How many staff are currently working in the IR/IT department?
   a. Has this number changed since the inception of AtD? Has the role or place of IR in the organization changed in that time? (2.1.c)

Resources devoted to AtD
6. Generally speaking, what percentage of the institution's resources has been devoted to creating or developing AtD efforts in an average program year?
   NOTE TO INTERVIEWERS: This question in both the pre-site visit and on-site questions so that teams can follow up on this question if necessary.
   a. What have been the biggest areas of AtD investments?
   b. Would the college spend/allocate institutional resources differently on AtD if they could to do it all over again? If so, why and how?

Management—Strategies:
7. What specific strategies or practices has the institution implemented that focus on improving student success since the inception of Achieving the Dream?
   NOTE TO INTERVIEWERS: Review strategy charts when discussing this information. Confirm and update information as needed.

8. Who was in charge or heavily involved with developing and implementing the strategies or practices associated with Achieving the Dream?

Overview of Achieving the Dream at the Institution

Overarching questions about the successes and challenges of Achieving the Dream
   Interviewees: Everyone

9. In your estimation, in what ways do you think your college excelled or made progress being a part of Achieving the Dream? Why do you think you were able to make such progress?
10. What areas/ways do you think were more challenging for your college? Why were these challenges?
   NOTE: If individuals having a hard time, here are some suggested areas: (1) Organizational structure; (2) Presidential commitment; (3) Faculty buy-in/resistance; (4) IT capacity; (5) Data Analysis; (6) Culture of evidence; (7) Focus on student success; (8) Focus on equity; (9) Priority of ATD vs. other priorities; (10) Board involvement; (11) Coach & DF; (12) Key Strategies; and (13) Engagement with external stakeholders/community

Alignment of Achieving the Dream goals with institutional goals
   Interviewees: VP Finance

11. Generally speaking, what percentage of the institution's resources have been devoted to creating or developing AtD efforts in an average program year?
   NOTE: This question in both the pre-site visit and on-site questions so that teams can follow up on this question if necessary.
   a. What have been the biggest areas of AtD investments?

b. Would the college spend/allocate institutional resources differently on AtD if they could to do it all over again? If so, why and how?

Effectiveness of Core and Data Teams
Interviewees: Core Team Leader, IR Director

12. How well did your Core and Data Teams function during your time in Achieving the Dream? (*PROBE: Is/was the Core team or Data team considered to be productive?*)
    a. Did the college offer stipends or release time for faculty or staff who were on the Core team? For those on the data team?
    b. What have been the challenges (e.g. conflicts) and benefits of serving on the core team or data team? How were they resolved?

Impact of Achieving the Dream: Implementation of AtD Principles Since Baseline

Leadership Commitment to Improving Outcomes (Principle 1)

Vision and values (Indicator 1.1)
Interviewees: President, Core Team Leader (all but #14)

13. What has been the current president's role with AtD?

14. What priorities has the president set for the college? What is he/she most concerned about, and why? (*PROBE: Are these priorities aligned with improving student learning and completion? If so, how?*) (1.1.a)
    NOTE TO INTERVIEWERS: Collect a copy of vision/mission statement of the college, if it exists, or check out the website in our pre-visit work

15. To what extent are inequities among racial and income groups a problem at your school? Have the president and senior leaders made these inequities a focus of their work?
    a. How, if at all, have concerns about these inequities been communicated to other at the college and in the community? (1.1b)

16. How does the college communicate its agenda with the larger college environment and the community? Does the college have a general message that it attempts to promote among these constituents? If so, what is that message? (*PROBE: Is the agenda focused on student success? Is this communicated through written statements/memos, convocations, faculty/staff meetings, news releases, on the website, etc?*) (1.1.c)

17. To what extent has AtD had an impact on the college's vision and goals for equity?

Commitment (Indicator 1.2)
Interviewees: President (all but #21), Core Team Leader (#22, 23), Board Member (#18, 19, 22)

18. What is the general focus of the college's board of trustees/governing board? (*PROBE: To what extent has the college's board of trustees/governing board made explicit its commitment to improve student success? To address inequities?*) (1.2.a)

19. What, if anything, does the college tell the board about its students and its programs/interventions to improve student success? About the progress of AtD? (*PROBE: Is the board regularly informed about student outcomes and AtD? If so, what sorts of information are presented to the board?*) (1.2.a)

20. Have the president and/or senior leaders made changes to school-wide policy or practices since the inception of Achieving the Dream? If so, what has been the focus of those changes? (*PROBE: To what extent do the president and senior leaders support changes in policies or practices to improve student success at the college?*) (1.2.b)

21. To what extent have faculty leaders (i.e., union and/or faculty senate heads) indicated their commitment to improving student success? (1.2.c)

22. In what ways, if any, has AtD affected the college board's commitment to student success?

23. In what ways, if any, has AtD affected the college president's and senior leader's commitment to student success?

Use of Data for Improvement (Principle 2)

IR/IT Capacity (Indicator 2.1)
Interviewees: Core Team Leader (#28), IR Director (except #26), IT Director

24. What skills and training do IR/IT staff members have? (*PROBE: What kind of quantitative and/or qualitative analyses can they perform? How regularly do they do this?*)
    a. What training, if any, do IR staff members receive in data collection or analysis procedures?
    b. Did this training exist before AtD? (2.1.a, 2.1.c)

25. Has the college's IT/IR staff capacity been adequate to meet the demand for data and institutional research? If not, what other resources or personnel do you think is needed to make IT/IR reach an adequate capacity? (2.1.a, 2.1.c)

26. What policies and procedures are in place to ensure the integrity of data collected, if any? (2.1.b)

27. To what extent do IR/IT staff work with faculty and staff to analyze data on student success? How frequently do they work together? Are faculty in certain departments more likely to work with IR staff on data and research than others? (*PROBE: Do administrators, faculty and staff have access to data on groups of students? How do they gain access to such data? Does the college's IT system allow for user-friendly retrieval and analysis of such data?*) (2.1.d, 2.3.a)

28. In what ways, if any, has Achieving the Dream affected your college's IR department or the college's perception of the importance of IR?

Process for identifying and addressing gaps in student achievement (Indicator 2.2)
Interviewees: Core Team Leader (#33, 34), IR Director

29. Does the college track the progress of students longitudinally? If so, what data is used? Which students are tracked? *(PROBE: Does the college use the data it reports to the AtD database or other data? Does the college look at student cohorts?)* (2.2a)
    a. How, if at all, does the college report out on its findings from longitudinal data? (2.2.a)
    b. Which key <u>indicators</u> does the college consider the best to assess student success?
30. What, if any, have been the key findings that have emerged from the college's longitudinal data analysis? (*PROBE: What problems in student achievement were recognized? What data proved most revealing about student success? About achievement gaps?*)
    a. How, if at all, were findings disaggregated (by race, income, gender, etc.)? How often were they disaggregated (e.g. routinely or rarely)? (2.2.b)
    b. Have there been any noticeable changes in the longitudinal data, either positive or negative? If so, what are these changes attributed to?

31. To what extent does the college conduct surveys and focus groups with students, faculty and staff to understand and improve the impact of programs and services? (2.2.c)

32. What other types of data has the college used to identify problems with student achievement and opportunities for improvement (e.g., CCSSE, internal faculty/staff evaluations)? (2.2.c)

33. What effect, if any, has AtD had on your college's data collection efforts (quantitative or qualitative)?

34. What effect, if any, did AtD have on the college's awareness of or focus on achievement gaps?

Process for formulating and evaluating solutions (Indicator 2.3)
Interviewees: VP/Dean Instruction (all but #36, a&b), VP Student Services (#35), Core Team Leader (#37), IR Director, Faculty developing strategies (#36, if time permits), Faculty Involved/Not Involved in AtD (#35), Student Services involved/not involved in AtD (#35)

35. What exposure, if any, has the campus community had to student outcomes data? How often is the larger campus community involved in examining these outcomes? How involved are they in developing and refining strategies to increase student success? (2.3.a)
    a. What has generally been the reaction by administrators in viewing these data? By faculty? By student services staff? (2.3.a)

36. To what extent has the college conducted evaluations on its strategies to improve student achievement? (2.3.b)
    a. What is the college's methodical approach to evaluation? (*PROBE: Is there a greater focus on quantitative methods? Qualitative methods? What types?*) (2.3.b)
    b. What strategies have been evaluated? What were the key results (if any)? Who within the college leads this work? (2.3.b)
    c. What deems pilot programs or practices as effective or as successful? (2.3.b; 4.1.d)
    d. Has the college used evaluation findings to determine whether or not to continue, expand, or discard a program or strategy? (2.3.b)

37. How, if at all, has AtD affected the college's process for formulating and evaluating solutions (to the student success challenges the college faces)?

Broad engagement (Principle 3)

Faculty and staff engagement (Indicator 3.1)
Interviewees: Core Team Leader (#43), VP/Dean Instruction (all but #41, 43 c), VP/Dean Student Services (#41-43, c&d), Faculty/Student services involved in strategy development (if time permits), Faculty involved/not involved in AtD (#38-40, 42, 43.a.b.d.), Student Services involved/not involved in AtD (#41, 42, 43.c.d.)

38. Do faculty members regularly meet to discuss course and program outcomes? If so, are there particular faculty who do this more often than others? What have faculty learned from these meetings about student outcomes? What strategies, if any, result from these meetings? *(PROBE: Do faculty members develop strategies for improving student success? Addressing achievement gaps?)* (3.1.a)

39. How often, if at all, do faculty assess the effectiveness of their programs and teaching strategies? What role does research (on best/effective practice) play in evaluating academic programs and practices? Are there some faculty who use research more often than others? (3.1.b)

40. To what extent do adjunct or part-time faculty members participate in the college's reform efforts/efforts to improve student success? How, if at all, does the college engage these faculty? (3.1.c)

41. To what extent are student services staff involved with assessing and developing strategies for improving student success? (3.1.d)

42. Do faculty and student services staff regularly work together on efforts to improve student success? If so, how are their roles and responsibilities aligned? (3.1.e)

43. How, if at all, has AtD affected:
    a. the involvement of full-time faculty involvement in institutional reform?
    b. the involvement of adjunct/part-time faculty involvement in institutional reform?
    c. the involvement of student services staff involvement with student success efforts changed since the inception of AtD?
    d. cross-program/cross-department collaboration?

Students and external stakeholder engagement (Indicator 3.2)
Interviewees: VP/Dean Instruction (#44, 46.a), Core Team Leader, External Partners (#45, 46.b)

44. In what ways, if any, does the college actively seek input from students about ways to improve student outcomes? (3.2.a)
    a. What type of representation do students have, if any, on committees or other campus groups concerned with student success? (3.2.a)

45. Does the college share data with outside stakeholder organizations (e.g. K-12, business groups) for the purpose of improving student success? If so, how is this information shared? (3.2.b)
    a. How, if at all, is the college currently working with outside stakeholders in strategic efforts designed to improve student success? (3.2.b)

46. What effect, if any, has AtD had on:
    a. students' involvement with institutional efforts to improve student success?
    b. external stakeholders involvement in the college's efforts to improve student success?

Systemic institutional improvement (Principle 4)

Institutional management (Indicator 4.1)
Interviewees: VP/Dean Instruction, VP Student Services (all but #49), Core Team Leader, VP Finance

47. To what extent has the college established a strategic planning process? How, if at all, are student outcomes data used in this strategic planning process? *(PROBE: Does the college use student outcomes data to set goals for student success and to measure outcomes?)* (4.1.a, 4.1.b)
    a. How, if at all, does this plan address student success and/or equity?

48. What are the college's priorities or goals for improving student success? (4.1.b) *(PROBE: Are there a few or many? Does the priorities focused or broad?)*
    NOTE TO INTERVIEWERS: Priorities are different than strategies—colleges are expected to develop a limited number of priorities for the college, under which they then develop strategies or interventions to address. Please refer to colleges' implementation proposals and annual reports to see difference; also discussed in baseline report, p. 42, and Liz's developmental education paper.
    NOTE: Research teams could review what college's baseline goals were or annual reports to inform this question.
    a. How, if at all, does the college's development of strategies relate to their priorities for the college? (4.1.b)
    b. How does the college decide to scale up and sustain pilot programs or practices? (4.1.f)

49. Where does the college stand in the accreditation cycle? Is there any connection between the college's reaccreditation work and AtD? If so, what is the link? (connection to 4.1.a)
    a. If the college has gone through accreditation review in the past 5 years, did the visiting team make any major recommendations? If so, what were they?

50. In general, how does the college make decisions about budget allocations for its programs and services? To what extent does the college use strategy/program effectiveness data to guide these decisions? (4.1.d)

51. What other major initiatives is the college currently undertaking (major grant programs, college-wide initiatives)? What are the goals of these other initiatives? What, if anything, sets AtD apart from these other initiatives?
    a. Apart from AtD, is the college using external grant funds strategically to support systemic efforts to improve student outcomes? If so, give examples. (4.1.e)

52. How, if at all, has AtD affected the college's strategic planning process/institutional management?

Organization (Indicator 4.2)

Interviewees: VP/Dean Instruction, VP/Dean Student Services

53. What types of committees, if any, does the college have to oversee or monitor institutional efforts to improve student outcomes? (4.2.a)
    a. (If applicable) Who are involved in these committees? How did they come to be a part of these committees? (4.2.a)
    b. (If applicable) To what extent do these committees rely on data for decision making? (4.2.a)

Hiring and Professional Development (Indicator 4.3)
Interviewees: VP/Dean Instruction, VP/Dean Student Services, Core Team Leader (#56), Faculty involved/not involved in AtD, Student services involved/not involved in AtD

54. What type of training, if any, does the college provide for faculty and staff?
    a. (If applicable) How, if at all, does the training relate to the college's efforts to improve student success and/or reduce achievement gaps? (4.3.a)
    b. Does the college provide any training to faculty and staff on how to use data and research to improve programs and services? (4.3.c)

55. How do new faculty members/staff learn about the college's mission or vision? Does the college provide orientation or training to new or adjunct faculty? What, if anything, is said about the college's commitment to student success? *(Probe: any differences between full time and adjunct instructors; new and seasoned instructors training?)* (4.3.b)

56. How, if at all, has AtD affected the college's training/professional development offerings for faculty and staff?

Achieving the Dream Strategy-specific Questions

Interviewees: Leader/developer of each strategy

NOTE TO INTERVIEWERS: Review strategy charts when discussing this information. Confirm and update information as needed. Many of these interviews could take place pre-visit.

57. Describe the process of implementing the strategy: How did it start? How has it changed since the beginning? Where is it now? What plans are there for the future?

58. How does the strategy promote student success or address achievement gaps? Which types of students does the strategy target? How many students have been "touched" by the intervention?

59. What type of evaluation, if any, is being conducted of this individual strategy?
    a. What type of evaluation? How was it structured?

b. How many students were involved?
c. What were the results?

NOTE: This question could have been answered in previous discussions of evaluation and, if so, can be skipped.

60. Does the institution plan on continuing the strategy in the future? If so, what are the plans for its sustainability and expansion?

61. How does the institution plan on funding the continuation of the strategy?

Assessing Achieving the Dream: Inputs and Sustainability

Coach and Data Facilitator Assistance
  Interviewees: Core Team Leader, IR Director

62. What sorts of assistance have the coach and data coach provided to the college?
a. What was most useful?
b. What was least helpful?

63. When was the coach and data facilitator of most help?
a. Would it be useful to have the assistance of a coach or data facilitator after your tenure in AtD ends? If so, who might be able to provide this sort of assistance after AtD?

Professional development and meetings
  Interviewees: Core Team Leader, IR Director

64. Which, if any, of the following AtD meetings were helpful for the college, and why:
a. The AtD kickoff meetings?
b. The Strategy Institutes?
c. Other meetings?

65. What additional assistance, if any, would have been helpful for AtD to have provided the college?

Sustainability
  Interviewees: President, Core Team Leader, VP Finance (# 66)

66. Which of the college's AtD efforts is the college considering to try to sustain going forward? What resources will be used to support them?
a. To what extent will your college continue to monitor achievement gaps and student success using methods and tools recommended by AtD?

67. Where does the college hope its AtD efforts will be (e.g. expand, modify) by next year (in the next 5 years)?

Lessons learned and AtD value-added questions:
  Interviewees: Everyone

NOTE: These are "returning to the big picture questions."

68. Which of your AtD efforts does the college consider to be <u>most and least successful</u>? Why? *(PROBE: What key accomplishments or "milestones" would you point to as evidence of institutional change brought about by AtD?)*

69. What lessons would you offer colleges just starting in Achieving the Dream? *(PROBE: Which <u>policy changes or program pilots</u>, if any, would you recommend to other schools starting where you were 4 years ago? What have been the most valuable lessons this college has learned regarding data use and analysis?)*

Questions for Student Focus Groups
(on AtD and college's premier strategy)

Student-strategy focus group

70. Tell us a little bit about your experiences as students here at this college. How long have you been at the college? What are you studying?

71. Have you ever heard of the Achieving the Dream initiative? If so, what do you know about Achieving the Dream at your college? How well-known would you say Achieving the Dream is among the student body?

72. (#44 on regular protocol) Does the college offer students ways to give feedback or suggestions about programs or services that help you improve your success? If so, please describe how.(3.2.a)
    a. Are you or anyone you know at the college on committees or other campus groups concerned with student success? (3.2.a) If so, please describe these groups and what they do.

73. In general, do you feel that the staff at this college support you and believe that you can succeed? Why or why not?
    a. Is the college doing enough to ensure that students succeed? If not, what more should the college be doing?

74. Do you believe the college is committed to helping all students succeed, particularly students of color and those who are low-income? If so, why?

75. You are participating in ____(name of program/class/intervention)____? What do you like about this program/class/intervention?

76. How did you first learn about this program/class/intervention?

77. How, if at all, do you feel like this program/class/intervention is helping you to succeed in college?

78. What, if anything, is difficult or challenging about the program/class/intervention?

79. How, if at all, do you feel like this program/class/intervention is different from other classes or programs you have been in?

80. What do you think the college could be doing better to help you improve your success as a student?

VCU Memo

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DATE: March 5, 2009

TO: Susan Gooden, PhD
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FROM: Lea Ann Hansen, Pharm D *Lea Ann Hansen, Pharm D / D*
           Chairperson, VCU IRB Panel D
           Box 980568

RE: **VCU IRB #: HM10082**
           Title: Achieving the Dream College Implementation Study

On March 5, 2009, the changes to your research study were **_approved_** in accordance with 110 (b) (2). This approval includes the following items reviewed by this Panel:

CONSENT/ASSENT:
- Research Subject Information and Consent Form – Student Version (version date 02/27/2009; 3 pages; received in ORSP 3/3/09)

As a reminder, the approval for this study expires on December 31, 2009. Federal Regulations/VCU Policy and Procedures require continuing review prior to continuation of approval past that date. Continuing Review report forms will be mailed to you prior to the scheduled review.

The Primary Reviewer assigned to your research study is Heather Traino, PhD. If you have any questions, please contact Dr. Traino at hmtraino@vcu.edu or 628-7530; or you may contact Aleksandra Baldwin, IRB Coordinator, VCU Office of Research Subjects Protection, at akbaldwin@vcu.edu or 827-1445.

Vita

Kasey Jewel Martin was born on January 10, 1979, in San Diego, California and is an American citizen. She graduated from Western Branch High School, Chesapeake, Virginia in 1997. She received a Bachelor of Science in Human Development from Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University in 2001. Martin's relevant research and professional experience are outlined below.

RESEARCH EXPERIENCE

July 2009 – Present

Program Coordinator

Minority Political Leadership Institute

The Grace E. Harris Leadership Institute and Virginia Legislative Black Caucus Foundation

The program offers insights and concepts regarding personal leadership, policy and legislative processes to cultivate a deeper understanding of legacy, responsible stewardship, public service and integrity for future leaders.

September 2008 – Present

Research Analyst

The Grace E. Harris Leadership Institute,

Virginia Commonwealth University, Richmond, VA

Primary emphasis on conceptualizing, coordinating, implementing, and evaluating research efforts within the Institute.

- *Research Coordination/Project management*: protocol development, site visit setup, data management, write and submit IRB proposals, conduct interviews and focus groups, data analysis, report writing, presenting research findings to internal and external audiences, and grant management
- *Research Development*: identify funding opportunities , assist in proposal writing, conduct background research for new projects, create research designs and scopes of work for research planning
- *Community Outreach/Training*: conduct workshops that focus on but not limited to leadership, personality type, addressing structural inequities, instruction and implementation of research methodologies, instruction on qualitative research tools and techniques, and conducting literature and funding searches)
- *Curriculum Development:* Assist /collaborate on seminar and program content

August 2004 – September 2008	**Graduate Research Associate**

Professor Susan T. Gooden

Governor Wilder School of Government and Public Affairs

Virginia Commonwealth University, Richmond, VA

Achieving the Dream (AtD): Community Colleges Project

- Assist MDRC in evaluation of AtD initiative funded by Lumina Foundation and its partners
- Conduct interviews of Community Colleges who have received AtD funding
- Use NVIVO 7.0 to code and analyze data from qualitative interviews
- Assist in report writing

Other Duties

- Help recruit graduate students to the Wilder School at graduate fairs
- Aide students who need help beginning a literature review or beginning database research
- Co-author scholarly journal articles that match professors current research agenda
- Coordinate and plan meetings and events
- Identify and research secondary data sources that match professors current research agenda
- Develop research project ideas for grant proposals
- Aide professor in conducting research

October 2002 –August 2004	**Graduate Research Associate**

Race and Social Policy Research Center

Virginia Tech, Blacksburg, VA

- Coordinate Montgomery County and Pulaski County Childcare Resource and Referral Projects
- Conduct phone interviews with all childcare providers in Montgomery and Pulaski County
- Develop research project ideas for grant proposals
- Work with Partners to Self Sufficiency (a collaboration of five department of social services) to the meet the needs of hard to serve welfare clients
- As Employer Liaison, facilitate relationships with the business community to encourage employment of welfare clients
- Coordinate Virginia Tech Internship
- Plan Fall and Spring New River Valley Job Fair Expo
- Collect data and write reports to meet state reporting

requirements for Hard-to-Serve Grant
- Data Analysis for Hard-to-Serve Grant Report

August 2001- October 2002	**Graduate Research Assistant** **Department of Human Development** Virginia Tech, Blacksburg, VA - Supervised undergraduate research students - Collected data using personal interviews, focus groups, and survey methods - Developed code Books - Entered and analyzed data using SAS and SPSS
August 2001- May 2002	**Graduate Assistant** **Department of Human Development** Virginia Tech, Blacksburg VA - Coordinate development of a New Master's Program in Human Development - Recorded the minutes at committee meetings to design the new master's program, - Conduct searches for information on internships to establish internship collaboration with nonprofit organizations in Richmond and Washington D.C - Organized mailings - Marketed and promoted program by giving presentations to potential students
August 2001- October 2002	**Graduate Student Research Leader for the Grandparents Raising Grandchildren on TANF Team** (Volunteer Position) Virginia Tech, Blacksburg, VA - Designed and Managed Project - Submitted IRB Proposals - Designed Interview Instrument - Assisted in Grant Writing - Collected information on possible participants from Local Departments of Social Services - Scheduled Interviews - Grant Administrator - Lead Team Meetings
May 2001-August 2001	**MAOP Scholars Program**

Summer Research Internship

Virginia Tech, Blacksburg, VA.

- Researched the Influence of PRWORA and TANF on Grandparents, Parents, and Caseworkers.
- Assisted in writing IRB proposal
- Assisted in the creation of Interview Instruments
- Assisted in grant writing
- Conducted In-depth Interviews,
- Wrote qualitative Data Code Book,
- Administered Minnesota Grant: wrote required reports
- Organized Data to be sent to Minnesota

May 2000-August 2000

McNair Scholars Program

Summer Research Experience

Virginia Tech, Blacksburg, VA

- Conducted a regional analysis on grandparent visitation rights
- Analyzed both quantitative and qualitative data collected from Grandparent Visitation Court Cases
- Wrote an academic journal article

May 2000- December 2000

Undergraduate Research Assistant (Volunteer)
Department of Human Development
Virginia Tech, Blacksburg, VA
- Assisted with course development (e.g., conducted library search and developed course packet);
- Designed a course, *Family Policy: Feminist Perspective on Rape*.

December 1999- May 2001

Undergraduate Research Assistant (Volunteer)

Department of Human Development

Virginia Tech, Blacksburg, VA

- Collected and coded data on two research projects
- Conducted a meta-analysis on family law articles in the journal *Family Relations*
- Briefed Court Cases

August 1997 – August 1998

Undergraduate Research Assistant
Department of Biology,
Virginia Tech, Blacksburg, VA

- Measured and weighed specimens, and entered data into SAS for statistical analysis.
- Assisted Professor Robert Jones' doctoral and master's students with their dissertation and thesis research.

CONSULTING

MDRC, New York, NY. Achieving the Dream Project, January 2005 – present.

MDC Inc. Chapel Hill, NC Structural Inequity/Equity Resource enter –Achieving the Dream, August 2007- December 2010

SPECIAL PROJECTS

May 2008 –May 2009 "VCU-UKZN NVivo Proposal", Office of International Education and

College of Humanities and Sciences, Virginia Commonwealth University

- Taught workshops on how to use NVIVO qualitative analysis software to faculty and graduate students at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa
- Worked as part of VCU team with UKZN Public Administration program to design student exchange program

Fall 2007 –Present   Structural Inequity Team, Achieving the Dream Initiative

- Help define focus on equity within the initiative
- Create resources for Community Colleges related to equity (Equity Resource Center)

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

May- August 2003   **Interviewer**
Center for Survey Research at Virginia Tech
Blacksburg, VA
- Conduct phone surveys

May –August 2002   **Assistant Intern Coordinator**
Multicultural Academics Opportunity Summer Internship Program
Virginia Tech, Blacksburg, VA
- Work with first generation college students helping provide them with a graduate research experience for a summer
- Supervise undergraduate summer interns
- Mentored undergraduate students in social sciences
- Organize extracurricular activities for the summer interns
- Assisted the Director with the coordination of the intern program
- Complete administrative assistant tasks

- Recruit students to Virginia Tech graduate programs

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

Fall 2006 -2008

Adjunct Instructor

Virginia Commonwealth University, Richmond, VA

Course: POLI/SOCY 320: Research Methods

August 2004 – Present

Graduate Teaching Assistant

Virginia Commonwealth University, Richmond, VA

Courses: PADM 623 Research Methods, PPAD 711 Public Policy Processes, GVPA 672 Social Equity and Public Policy Analysis, PADM 684: Cultural Competency in Public Administration

- Collaborated on course curriculum
- Guest lecture
- Provide Students with one on one help
- Provide student support for group projects
- Help design assignments and exams
- Manage Blackboard course page
- Assist in grading

January 2004 – May 2004

Graduate Teaching Assistant

Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, Blacksburg VA

Course: PAPA 6224 Design, Implementation, and Evaluation of Public Policy and Public Programs

- Manage Blackboard course page
- Provide web assistance to students
- Assist in grading,
- Guest lecture when needed

August 2001- October 2002

Graduate Teaching Assistant

Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, Blacksburg VA

Courses: Family Law and Policy, Community Programs, and Parent Education

- Assisted with preparation of lectures, course packets and materials, syllabi, and examinations.
- Developed power point presentations and Excel

spreadsheets for course grading

August 2001- May 2002   **Graduate Teaching Assistant**

Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, Blacksburg VA

Course: Human Sexuality

- Assisted with designing a Human Sexuality course with an international perspective
- Searched for other courses as models
- Conducted an extensive literature review of books and articles that would be appropriate to use

PUBLICATIONS

Gooden, S. & **Martin, K.** (2014). Facilitating college success among emerging Hispanic serving institutions: Multiple perspectives yield commonly shared diversity goals. *Journal of Public Management and Social Policy*, 20 (1).

Zachry Rutschow, E., Richburg-Hayes, L., Brock, T., Orr, G., Cerna, O., Cullina, D., Reid Kerrigan, M., Jenkins, D., Gooden, S. & **Martin, K**. (2011). *Turning the Tide: Five Years of Achieving the Dream in Community Colleges.* New York: MDRC. February.

Gardenhire-Crooks, A., Collado, H., **Martin, K**. & Castro, A. (2010). Terms of Engagement: Men of Color Discuss Their Experiences in Community College. New York: MDRC. March.

Gordon, J.A., Barnes, C.M., & **Martin, K.J.** (2009). Undergraduate research methods: Does size atter? A look at the attitudes and outcomes of students in a hybrid class format versus a traditional class format. *Journal of Criminal Justice Education,* 20(3).

Gooden, S. T., Jones, D. , **Martin, K. J.**, Boyd, M. (2009). Social equity in local emergency management planning." *State and Local Government Review,* 41(1).

Brock, T. , Jenkins, D., Ellwein, T., Miller, J. , Gooden, S., **Martin, K.**, MacGregor, C., & Pih, M. with Bethany Miller and Christian Geckeler. (2007). *Building a Culture of Evidence for Community College Student Success: Early Progress in the Achieving the Dream Initiative.* New York: MDRC. May.

Gooden, S. T., **Martin, K.J.** & Thomas, N. (2007). *African American Women in Poverty: Undeserving for Over a Century,* Washington, DC: The Center for Research on African American Women, Winter/Spring.

Ajose, L., Brock, T. , Gooden, S., MacGregor, C. & **Martin, K**. (2005). *Feedback from the MDRC Site Visits.* Achieving the Dream Initiative, Lumina Foundation for Education.

Gooden, S. T.& **Martin,** K. J. (2005). Welfare Reform: Government Does Matter (and resources do, too!). *Public Administration Review.*

Martin, K. (2004). *Biracial Women in Therapy: Between the Rock of Gender and the Hard Place of Race Review Essay. Bridging the Gap: Newsletter of the Section on Women in Public Administration.*

Douglas, N.E., Hairston, D. L., Lowell, S. G., & **Martin K. J.** (2003). *Diversity and Conflict Resolution Leadership Program Evaluation.*

Martin, K. (2003). Work and Family Life: Review Essay. *Bridging the Gap: Newsletter of the Section on Women in Public Administration.*

Henderson, T.L., & **Martin, K.J.** (2002). Collaborative Learning: One Approach to Teaching Family Law. *Family Relations.*

Martin, K, Keller, C. , Lee, S. , Smith, B., Arditti, J : (2002*) Executive brief: Cost benefit analysis of programming to the incarcerated and their families .* Presented to Virginia Majority Leader Morgan Griffith.

CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS

Facilitation Success: Insights for Community Colleges with a Growing Latino Population, Social Equity Leadership Conference, Savannah, GA, June 2012

Mission Possible: Social Equity in Local Governance, Paper presented at the Annual Association of Public Policy and Management Conference, Washington D.C., November 2011.

Mission Possible: Social Equity in Local Governance, Presented at the Social Equity Leadership Conference, 10th Annual Conference, Binghamton, NY, June 2011.

Mission Possible: Social Equity in Local Governance, Poster presentation at the Annual Conference of the American Society of Public Administration, Baltimore, MD, March 2011.

Analyzing the Role of Coaches and Data Facilitators in Achieving the Dream, Presented at the Achieving the Dream: 2011 Strategy Institute, Indianapolis, IN, February 2011.

Taking Pride and Promoting the Success of Underserved Students: Impressions from Houston Area 4-year Institutions, Presented at the Social Equity Leadership Conference, 9th Annual Conference,Baltimore, MD, June 2010.

Mission/Vision Statements In Local Virginia Governments: Role of Social Equity, Presented at the Social Equity Leadership Conference, 9th Annual Conference, Baltimore, MD, June 2010.

Race Talk at Community Colleges: What Minority Males have to Say, Paper Presented at the Transforming Race 2010 Conference, Kirwan Institute, Ohio State University, Columbus, OH, March, 2010.

Taking Pride and Promoting the Success of Underserved Students, Presented at the Achieving the Dream, 2010 Strategy Institute, Charlotte, NC, February 2010.

A Regional Commitment to Student Success: Impressions from Houston Area Colleges, Paper presented at the Annual Association of Public Policy and Management Conference, Washington D.C., November 2009.

Fear of Engagement Academically Underprepared Men of Color in Community College, Presented at the Social Equity Leadership Conference, 8th Annual Conference, Rutgers, NJ, June 2009.

Equity Resource Center, Presented at the Achieving the Dream: 2009 Strategy Institute, San Francisco, CA, February 2009.

Motivating and Engaging Males of Color in Community College: Students' Voices, Presented at the Achieving the Dream: 2009 Strategy Institute, San Francisco, CA, February 2009.

Overcoming Inequity on the Road to Excellence. Presented at the Achieving the Dream: 2008 Strategy Institute, Atlanta, GA, February 2008.

Through the Lens of Inequity: Strategies for Improving Equity and Excellence, Workshop presented at the Achieving the Dream: 2008 Strategy Institute, Atlanta, GA, February 2008.

Evaluating Success: Possibilities and Methods for Assessing Progression in Achieving the Dream. Presented at the Achieving the Dream: 2008 Strategy Institute, Atlanta, GA, February 2008.

A View from the Middle: A Case Study of SCHIP Implementation Across Levels of Government, Presented at the Annual Conference of the American Society of Public Administration, Washington, DC, March 2007.

Achieving the Dream: Closing the Gaps for Minority and Low Income Students in Community Colleges, Presented at the Social Equity Leadership Conference, 6th Annual Conference, Richmond, VA February 2007.

Evaluating the Houston Endowment, Inc. Demonstration, Achieving the Dream, 2007 Strategy Institute, Albuquerque, NM, January 2007.

Impact of SCHIP on Families and their Overall Well-being, Paper presented at the Annual Association of Public Policy and Management Conference, Washington D.C., November 2005.

Preparing Culturally Competent Public Servants to Achieve Social Equity in the 21st Century. Paper presented at that Annual American Society for Public Administration Conference. Milwaukee, WI , April 2005.

Developing E-Government: An OMB Perspective, Paper presented at the Annual SECOPA Conference" Governance in a New Era of Cooperation" Charlotte, NC, October 2004.

Brown vs. Board of Education and the State of Educational Policy, Paper presented at the Policy, the Market, and the Polis Panel, High Table, Blacksburg, VA, April 2004.

Developing E-government: OMB Perspective, Paper presented at the Contextual Pressures of Public Administration Conference, Harrisonburg, VA, December 2003.

Mr. Social Security: The Life of Wilbur Cohen. Paper presented at the History of Public Administration Conference, Harrisonburg, VA, October 2003.

User Illusion: Social Determinism in Globalization. Paper presented at Globalization, Development and Public Administration Conference, Falls Church, VA, November 2002.

Conceptualizing the Impact Incarceration has on Families. Paper presented at Quint-State, Blacksburg, VA , April 2002.

Regional Analysis of Grandparent visitation rights: Implications for teaching family law. Paper presented at the annual meeting of National Council on Family Relations, Rochester, NY, November 2001.

Grandparent visitation rights: What do justices mean by the best interest of the child? Paper presented at the annual meeting of National Council on Family Relations, Minneapolis, MN, November, 2000.