



Dr. Alice Jacobs  
President  
Danville Area Community College  
2000 E. Main St.  
Danville, IL 61832

Dear President Jacobs:

We are thrilled to have Danville Area Community College as part of the Achieving the Dream National Reform Network and are deeply appreciative of you and your colleagues' continued commitment to student success and equity. After reviewing your 2015 Annual Reflection and receiving input from your coaching team, we offer several observations in this letter about your institution's progress to date toward achieving the student success and equity goals identified by your team. We have arranged the review using the five broad principles that ATD views as key to institutional transformation, which also serve as the sections for your Principles Assessment Survey.

### Reflections on the Five Achieving the Dream Principles

#### *Committed Leadership*

- Your sustained leadership since joining Achieving the Dream has been impressive. We commend you for sending seven people including a Board Member to DREAM 2015, particularly during a period of declining enrollment and funding.
- We also commend the continued engagement of the Board and the community in your work. The Board's interest and involvement with the student-success agenda is evidenced by regular reports and retreats focused on progress toward achieving goals and objectives.
- Development of leaders at all levels will be critical to provide continuity in progress of the transformation of the college. We encourage you to continue to implement strategies to build the next level of champions for the student-success agenda.

#### *Use of Evidence to Improve Policies, Programs, and Services*

- The routine review of Key Performance Indicators demonstrates your willingness to change policies and procedures for maximum benefit to students. We are impressed with the candid and transparent conversations around the achievement gaps at the college.

- We applaud the college's use of disaggregated longitudinal data for assessment and continuous improvement of interventions. We are pleased with the continued commitment to build a strong culture of evidence where the use of data is expected to lead changes in policies, programs and services.
- As you strengthen your evaluation plans and logic models, it will be important to discontinue programming that is not effective and to create stronger connections between interventions that are successful.

### *Broad Engagement*

- The "moving data to strategies" in-service professional development for full- and part-time faculty were excellent venues for involving faculty to address strategies to improve success rates.
- It will be important to focus on a systematic plan to enhance communication. We encourage the college to continue to build out your communication strategies to ensure that the college community stays informed about the impact of student success strategies.
- We support the college in continuing the important work with the local high schools and East Illinois University to strengthen student access and completion.

### *Systemic Institutional Improvement*

- Your ATD work will provide an excellent framework for ongoing accreditation activities, especially the Higher Learning Commission quality project that is focused on mandatory advising. We are energized by the use of your ATD work in preparing for your accreditation cycle.
- Evidence of your institution's evolution toward a student-centered culture can be found in how departmental budget requests are tied to the strategic plan which centers on student success.
- As you move forward with your change initiatives it will be important that the professional development activities continue to evolve into a comprehensive program that is intentional and supportive of the strategic plan.

### *Equity*

- We applaud the effectiveness of your internal and external committees' abilities to move the college forward on equity issues.
- We are impressed that the staffing of the college reflects the demographics of the community and that the gaps are beginning to close between the retention of African-Americans and Caucasians.

- As you implement mandatory advising, you will want to continue your increased attention to the students most at risk.

### Final Thoughts

We are impressed with the transformation of the college since joining ATD which is manifested in your strategic planning, the willingness to change policies, and the budgeting processes. The leadership and sustained focus on student success are evidence of the commitment to students. The new pathways in developmental education, work on alternative course placement, and ongoing professional development programming are excellent. The sustained work targeting African-American and under-resourced students is impressive.

ATD is continuously building upon the institutional change lessons learned from our network over the last ten years and, as a result, we have recently released the next iteration of our institutional change framework. This framework identifies seven core capacity areas essential to growing colleges' abilities to impact student outcomes through systemic and sustainable practices. In the next year, ATD plans to release a new suite of tools and other resources to undergird colleges' implementation of and maturation in the core capacity areas. We urge you to make the most of the new framework and resources as you take your student success work to the next level.

We appreciate the hard work, time, and resources that your institution devotes to your Achieving the Dream efforts. We encourage you to discuss the feedback in this letter with your Leadership Coach and Data Coach, who are ready to support and guide you moving forward as it may assist you in shaping the direction of your ongoing student success efforts. We look forward to working with you in the coming year and welcome your questions and comments along the way.

Sincerely,



Dr. Karen A. Stout  
President & CEO



Cindy Lenhart  
Vice President for Community College Relations