

Southwest Texas Junior College (SWTJC) has improved the retention of all first-time-in-college (FTIC) students from 73% to 82%, even as the student population grows, with the help of a College Success Skills (COLS) course and other strategies.

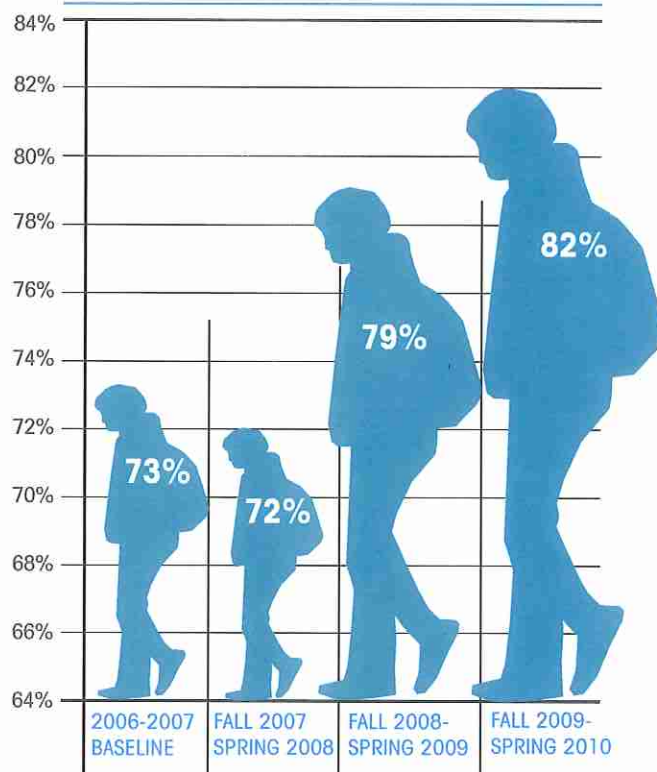


What We Are Doing

COLS, a three-credit semester course, teaches study skills, time management, reading strategies, and research techniques. Students placed in two or more developmental courses are required to take it.

- In Fall 2010, 69% of the 254 students who took COLS completed it
- In Spring 2011, 78% of the 254 COLS students persisted compared to 71% of a multi-year historic comparison group, and 40% of a Fall 2010 peer cohort
- Overall FTIC retention increased from 73% in Fall 2006-Spring 2007 to 82% for Fall 2009-Spring 2010

Retention Rates Improve as FTIC Enrollment Grows



Who We Are

SWTJC's four campuses serve eleven counties along Texas' southwest border with Mexico.

In Fall 2010, the college had 5,700 students; eighty-two percent were Hispanic, two percent were African American, and one percent were Asian, Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander. Thirty-nine percent of SWTJC students received Pell grants.

With Achieving the Dream, SWTJC has made significant changes in its practices to incorporate data-informed processes, such as program reviews and unit action plans (UAPs), in a systematic approach to decision-making. Assessments, outcomes, and other data help college personnel target student services and devise interventions to meet students' needs.

"Our Achieving the Dream strategies help our students, faculty, administration, and staff accomplish great things at Southwest Texas Junior College."

- Ismael Sosa Jr., *President*, Southwest Texas Junior College

How We Work

Student Success Centers on each campus play critical roles in diagnosing student achievement gaps, implementing strategies to address gaps, and evaluating interventions. The centers also provide general tutoring and **Supplemental Instruction** for English, math, and biology courses.

SWTJC has scaled its **Critical Reading Intervention** to include gateway English,

history, and math courses. Reading mastery improved on each dimension included on the pre- and post-tests completed by 304 of the 1,333 students enrolled in English 1301 during Fall 2010.

The college is testing **Math Linking**, which enables students to complete the final developmental math course and the first college-level math course during the same semester.

Achieving the Dream Model

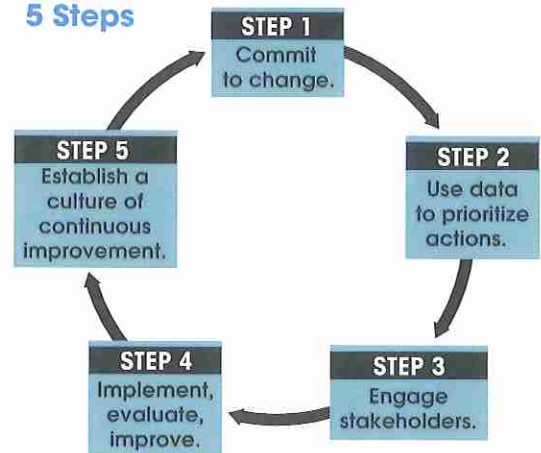
Achieving the Dream community colleges commit to our Student-Centered Model of Institutional Improvement. Based on four principles, the model frames the overall work of helping more students, particularly low-income students and students of color, stay in school and earn a college certificate or degree.

Each college approaches the work differently, but Achieving the Dream's five-step process provides practical guidelines for keeping the focus where it belongs and building momentum over time. Throughout the process, Achieving the Dream coaches offer customized support and help each college's core team implement data-informed programs and policies that build long-term, institution-wide commitment to student success.

4 Principles

- ▶ Committed leadership
- ▶ Using evidence to improve programs & services
- ▶ Broad engagement
- ▶ Systemic institutional improvement

5 Steps



1 Goal: Student success.

Achieving the Dream Leader Colleges



Leader Colleges are demonstrating the power of the Achieving the Dream Student-Centered Model of Institutional Improvement. They show us it is possible to raise persistence and graduation rates, close achievement gaps, and change lives. Leader Colleges embody the ultimate goal of Achieving the Dream, and as such, serve as mentors within our community of learners.

To be eligible for Leader College distinction, colleges must show three or more years

of improvement on one or more of these five measures:

- Course completion
- Advancement from developmental to credit-bearing courses
- Completion of college-level math and English courses
- Term-to-term and year-to-year retention
- Completion of certificates or degrees

For more information, visit
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or 1-855-ATDream


Achieving the Dream™