



Dear President Jacobs:

Thank you for being an Achieving the Dream Institution and for putting what we know is a tremendous amount of effort into improving student success. We reviewed your 2013 Annual Reflection and offer our observations in this letter about the college's progress to date.

Danville Area Community College has demonstrated a strong commitment to the student success agenda based on a culture of evidence. Your decision to place student success at the heart of your strategic planning process is further evidence of your commitment to systemic change. We also applaud your broad-based approach to embedding equity in your student success agenda. The college's improvement in each ATD outcome metric is impressive.

We are encouraged by your progress in implementing the Achieving the Dream model in the following ways:

*Committed Leadership*

It is evident that one of the greatest areas of strength at Danville Area Community College is the President and senior leaders' commitment to building a strong success and equity agenda. We are pleased to acknowledge that the Board, the president, and faculty and staff leaders are enthusiastically providing guidance and direction for systemic change.

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

The expansion of IR capacity at the institution is further confirmation of your commitment to building a culture of evidence. The increased presence of the IR office through the research briefs and the work of the data analysts are facilitating the institutionalization of using data to make decisions. Incorporating the ATD framework into the new strategic planning process promotes alignment of the strategic plan with the student success and equity agenda.

*Broad Engagement*

The use of a Faculty Academy to ensure ongoing full-time and part-time faculty engagement in the student success agenda is commendable. We support the continued use of surveys and focus groups to understand barriers to student success to further engagement. Most impressive is the continued engagement of the community in the 22-member Access, Equity, and Diversity committee.

*Systemic Institutional Improvement*

We applaud the successful transition from ATD being seen as a project to leveraging ATD as a framework for systemic change. This is a coherent approach to broad engagement in the student success agenda. Incorporation of ATD work into the strategic planning process is further evidence of the college's commitment to systemic institutional improvement.

### *Equity*

We find the efforts to discover creative and sustainable ways to close the achievement gaps for African American males to be promising with a strong team to lead these efforts.

We recognize that improving student outcomes can be both rewarding and challenging. As you plan for the coming year, we encourage you to take a closer look at the following:

### *Committed Leadership*

It is our suggestion that you continue to enhance the process of orienting new leaders to the student success and equity agenda.

### *Broad Engagement*

Although there has been engagement in the student success agenda from the outset, it is essential to further engage the Board, part-time faculty, the community, and students in the ongoing work. We urge the college to encourage the faculty continue engaging in dialog around best practices and strengthen regular review of course and program outcomes.

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

Please continue to strengthen the processes of evaluating and scaling up successful strategies. It might be helpful to continue professional development relating to data analysis and application of the results. We encourage the college to evaluate the “Support Groups for African American Males and Females” to determine the ability to scale up the intervention and to close the achievement gap for African American students.

### *Systemic Institutional Improvement*

It may prove to be beneficial for the college to strengthen its IR capacity to include a strong evaluation component for all new interventions in determining which interventions to scale.

### *Equity*

As you listen to the diverse voices of your stakeholders, we encourage you to continue your goal to diversify staffing to reflect the demographics of the community.

As you know, this is a critical time for all of us who are committed to the mission of community colleges. We need to be focused and strategic in our work if we are to create clear and meaningful pathways for our students as they strive toward success. It is our belief that by working together, as a community of learners, practitioners and citizens, we can set high standards and help our students achieve their goals.

We appreciate the time, resources, and hard work that you and your faculty and staff have devoted to your Achieving the Dream efforts. We look forward to working with you in the coming year and to seeing you at DREAM 2014.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Carl A. Lincoln". The signature is written in black ink on a white background.