

# Data Brief



August 2011

Danville Area Community College

Volume 1, Issue 3

## REWIND TO 2008:

Dr. Jacobs hears about Achieving the Dream (AtD), a national initiative started in 2004 to help more community college students succeed by focusing on course completion, retention to the second year, program completion, and emphasizing the use of data driven decision making processes. With Dr. Jacobs encouragement, Danville Area Community College submits an application in March 2009 to participate in Achieving the Dream (AtD). The College is accepted to participate, along with four other Illinois community colleges. Participation requires attendance at the Kickoff Institute in Austin, Texas in June 2009 and at a Strategy Institute in February 2010 in North Carolina. A team is recruited to attend these meetings. One of the perks of being accepted into the program is that an AtD coach and data facilitator is assigned to each college to assist in planning student success initiatives/interventions on campus.

## DEADLINE FOR AtD PLAN:

After attending the Kickoff and Strategy Institutes, DACC formulates a plan of action and submits it to AtD. The plan of action includes gathering and analyzing data, conducting focus groups, and deciding how best to address student success initiatives at Danville Area Community College. Where are our students struggling? How can we help them be more successful? DACC decides to address three initiatives: First Year Experience, Teaching and Learning, and Equity and Inclusion.



## FAST FORWARD TO TODAY:

**FIRST YEAR EXPERIENCE (FYE):** Stop and think for a minute about a student's *First Year Experience* on a college campus. What does that entail? Registration, late-registration, orientation, Success in College course, counseling, financial aid, early warning system ... and the list goes on and on! There are so many things that it can be overwhelming to get your arms around.

That is exactly what the FYE Team found out when they began to study the topic. The first plan of attack was to map the first year. For example, where do students go when they first walk on campus? How do they find out about Financial Aid? Is each staff member giving them the same message? Do the students know what it takes to be successful in college?

After much discussion and knowing they were not making much progress, the team took the advice of our AtD coaches in March, and decided not to tackle the first year in entirety, but to break it down into smaller, more manageable parts. The team has started having front-line staff meetings to make sure everyone is on the same page and students hear the same message. They are also studying the Success in College course, and trying to determine the answers to the following questions: Is the course meeting our students' needs? Is it meeting faculty members' needs? Does it make a difference in the success of our students? Do we (faculty and staff) believe in the course? What exactly needs to be in the course?

In order to answer these questions, a Success in College Task Force has been established. After studying the course over the next few months, the goal is to pilot a new Success in College (INST-101) format in January 2012.



**TEACHING AND LEARNING:** The Teaching and Learning Team decided to promote student engagement in the classrooms, as well as kick off the 2010-2011 academic year by inviting two faculty from Patrick Henry Community College to share their knowledge of and experiences with Cooperative Learning. Since that time, the Teacher Excellence Academy has formed and two faculty-led breakfast roundtables have been held on campus focusing on cooperative learning. Many faculty are incorporating these strategies into their curriculum, finding success, and sharing the data with their colleagues. The Team plans to conduct a survey at the fall in-service to gather input on ideas for topics to be discussed at future sessions. As a result and with the end goal of improved student retention, cooperative learning has been added or enhanced in many classroom settings on the DACC campus.



**EQUITY AND INCLUSION:** After DACC analyzed the data compiled for Achieving the Dream, it was determined that many of our African American students are not successful. After much research on how to help students succeed, the Equity and Inclusion Team decided to implement two programs: a campus organization for males and a specially-designed course for females. While both programs address similar issues, they were designed differently because research shows that men prefer a fraternal interaction with their peers, while women prefer more structure such as is found in a classroom.

Team member Rickey Williams started the A-MALE (African-American Males Addressing Life Effectively) organization in the fall of 2010. Carla Boyd developed the WISE (Women Inspiring Success Effectively) course, and initiated it in Spring 2011. The goal of this intervention is to provide social, cultural, and/or academic support to encourage and engage minority students to successfully complete their program of study. Data will be collected on the success of the students participating in both A-MALE and WISE, as well as both a male and female comparison cohort of students not participating. If you know of an African American student in the 18-24 year old age range who might benefit from one of these groups, please refer them to Rickey or Carla.

The Equity and Inclusion Team also invited Bethanie H. Tucker, Ed.D., to campus for the January 2011 in-service to speak on the topic of Understanding and Engaging Under-Resourced College Students. Dr. Tucker humorously shared with us her real-life experiences growing up, and the challenges that not only she faced, but the challenges that some of our students currently face. These experiences made us think about how we might better serve our students. The Equity and Inclusion Team plans to continue professional development on the topics of equity, inclusion, and /or cultural awareness on an annual basis so that faculty and staff can continue to provide the best possible learning environment for each student.



### **GET INVOLVED:**

If you have not had the opportunity to become actively involved in the Achieving the Dream initiative, please contact one of the team facilitators below to find out when their next meeting will be held. All teams welcome new members!

FYE: Stacy Ehmen, Cindy Peck, Laura Williams

Teaching & Learning: Wendy Brown, Dave Kietzmann

Equity & Inclusion: Carla Boyd, Nancy Boesdorfer