

ACHIEVING THE DREAM HONORS

**The Community College of Baltimore  
County**



**LEAH MEYER AUSTIN AWARD 2015**

This year, Achieving the Dream recognizes two first-place winners of the Leah Meyer Austin Award: The Community College of Baltimore County and Patrick Henry Community College. Lumina Foundation for Education established the Leah Meyer Austin Award in 2008 to recognize community colleges' outstanding achievement in supporting and promoting student success through the principles of Achieving the Dream: committed leadership, use of evidence to improve programs and services, broad engagement,

systemic institutional improvement, and equity. The award is given in honor of Leah Meyer Austin, an Achieving the Dream board member and former senior vice president at Lumina Foundation, whose visionary leadership shaped Achieving the Dream. Award recipients have systemically and sustainably transformed their institutions by shaping programs, practices, and services to promote success for all students, especially low-income students and students of color. Active Achieving the Dream colleges are eligible to apply for this award.

# The Community College of Baltimore County

Baltimore, MD • Sandra Kurtinitis, President • [www.ccbcmd.edu](http://www.ccbcmd.edu)

Institutional transformation did not happen overnight at the Community College of Baltimore County (CCBC). And it did not happen by chance. As the largest provider of higher education in the region, CCBC takes the responsibility for student success seriously, and has committed to making college work for all learners.

That commitment was put to the test when CCBC came to the stark realization that most of its students were not advancing to and through gateway courses and academic programs. From 2007 to 2011, CCBC experienced dramatic increases in enrollments, upwards of 36 percent. With these increases came more students who were less prepared, more diverse, and more at-risk of dropping out. And these challenges disproportionately impacted African-American students.

So what did the college do in the face of these challenges?

“We could have ignored the shortcomings and simply celebrated the success of a few. We could have steered clear of embarrassing disclosures about the low success rates of our African-American students or developmental learners,” said CCBC President Sandra Kurtinitis. “But we chose another path, one that forced us to work together to redesign the college experience. This route involved opening our minds to radically new ways of doing business.”

This route led to CCBC’s selection as a 2015 Leah Meyer Austin Award winner.

## Fast Facts (FY 2014)

Annual Unduplicated Headcount, Credit Students	33,064
Part-time	67%
Developmental education	79%
First generation	34%
Pell recipients	40%
Employed 20+ hours per week	52%
Annual Unduplicated Headcount, Continuing Education Students	34,355
Total Annual Unduplicated Headcount	67,319

## Background

Located in Baltimore, Maryland, CCBC was created from three predecessor colleges – Catonsville, Dundalk, and Essex Community College – and officially became a single

college, multi-campus institution in 1998. The newly formed institution brought with it the rich history and culture of the formerly independent community colleges that has spanned nearly 60 years.

Today, CCBC is ranked among the top providers of undergraduate education, workforce development, technology training, and life enrichment in the Baltimore metropolitan area. Nationally recognized as a leader in innovative learning strategies, CCBC educates nearly 70,000 people each year, including more than half of all Baltimore County residents attending undergraduate college.

CCBC offers degrees as well as credit certificates and career training certification and licensure in more than 200 programs. Its Division of Continuing Education is the preferred training partner for Maryland businesses, serving more than 100 employers annually with customized employee development training.

## Transformation

Although CCBC has been on the journey to student-centered learning since becoming a single college in 1998, the college sees its involvement in Achieving the Dream as the turning point. “Achieving the Dream not only helped us understand how to identify challenges—but also gave us tools and resources to tackle those challenges,” said Donna McKusick, dean of developmental education & special academic programs.

Through an intensive analysis of student success data by faculty, staff, and administrators, CCBC learned that all students needed more guidance; developmental students were not reaching credit courses because of between-semester attrition; financial challenges were making students lose momentum toward completion; and faculty felt challenged teaching diverse populations. The college responded by implementing comprehensive reforms branded Student Success 101, which included:

- Improving advising system services through various delivery mechanisms. CCBC provides comprehensive academic advising to 15,000 new students and another 15,000 continuing students each year.
- Scaling the Accelerated Learning Program (ALP),

which allows students who place into upper-level developmental writing courses to enroll concurrently in English 101, a gateway credit course. ALP's success led to the creation of the Accelerated Math Program (AMP), which combines lower-level developmental math and blends upper-level intermediate algebra with college algebra.

- Scaling Academic Development: Transitioning to College (ACDV 101), the college's student success course, by making it mandatory for all new CCBC students. In addition, the college added contextualized information for course sections designed to address the needs of African-American men, honors students, as well as students on science, technology, engineering, and mathematics pathways.
- Developing a financial literacy curriculum that infuses financial literacy lessons throughout the student success course and developmental education courses. The curriculum provides context and opportunities to practice life skills, such as computing loan interest rates, recognizing financial predators, and developing savings plans.
- Creating a financial coaching service for students who are in academic difficulty due to financial issues.
- Reconfiguring and expanding its Culturally Responsive Teaching (CRT) program to include workshops on social capital, stereotype threat, and models of intelligence. The college now provides CRT professional development to more than 500 faculty, staff, and administrators.

Thus began the hard work of institutional transformation through cross-sector, multi-level committee work, empowering faculty and staff to modify processes and policies, solicit additional funding, provide ongoing evaluation of progress, and celebrate successes.

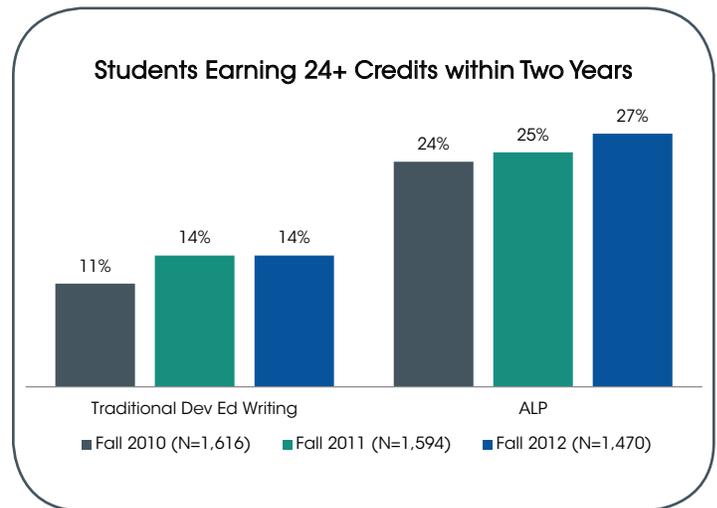
## Leading Change

More impressive than the depth and breadth of these inter-connected interventions are the efforts to bring them to scale to reach more and, eventually, most students. While all of these interventions began in pilot mode, CCBC always planned for scale, and the results have been dramatic.

- More than 90 percent of students rate their experiences with advisors very high.
- Course success and retention rates were higher on

average for African-American students in ACDV cohorts than all African-American students.

- ALP students accumulated credits at higher rates than students in traditional developmental writing courses.



- ALP students completed the gateway course English 101 at higher rates than students in traditional developmental education courses.
- Students completing ACDV 101 have higher fall-to-fall retention rates than students who fail to complete or are exempt from the course. The same is true for fall-to-spring retention.
- Since the financial empowerment program began in 2010, students have collectively saved \$80,000 through CCBC piggy banks.
- From 2010 to 2014, CCBC has increased certificate and degree completion by 55 percent.

To build and sustain systematic change, CCBC has threaded student success into every offering and service—from student services to academic support to teaching. As a result, Student Success 101 permeates the college at all levels. So what's next for CCBC?

“As we continue our journey into Student Success 102, we have assembled four interdisciplinary teams to create our Accelerated Priority Pathways program, with improved orientation, better test preparation, and developmental on-ramps,” said Kurtinitis. “This is how we now work and how we will move into the future—with strong leadership, with evidence, with stakeholder engagement, and with systemic change.”

*Written by: Carrie E. Henderson & Julia Lawton, Achieving the Dream*

# Patrick Henry Community College

Martinsville, VA • Angeline Godwin, President • [www.ph.vccs.edu/](http://www.ph.vccs.edu/)

Patrick Henry Community College (PHCC) also receives the 2015 Leah Meyer Austin Award.

PHCC is one of 23 community colleges in Virginia. The college was founded in 1962 as a two-year branch of the University of Virginia's School of General Studies, and became an autonomous two-year college two years later. Serving Martinsville, Henry County, Patrick County, and the southern portion of Franklin County, PHCC is a comprehensive open-door institution, accredited by the Commission on Colleges of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools to award associate degrees.

The college offers 15 associate degree programs with an additional 20 specializations available within those degree options, 12 certificate programs, and more than 40 career studies certificate programs. PHCC also delivers a variety of nontraditional programs, such as customized workforce development training, industry-recognized certifications, developmental and transitional programs, and courses for personal enrichment.

Through PHCC's extensive curriculum of credit and non-credit technology, business, and professional development programs, it strives to offer in-demand programs within the service region, and regularly meets

with local employers to identify their workforce skill needs to integrate and customize these resources to best fit their needs.

PHCC's relationship with Achieving the Dream has transformed the college and dramatically altered the way it educates students. Eleven years after joining Achieving the Dream, PHCC has seen impressive results.

- Cooperative learning training reached almost 100 percent of the target population.
- Instructors trained in cooperative learning have higher student pass rates after the training.
- Completion and transfer rates within three years have more than doubled across all student groups, including low-income and African-American students.
- Gateway English completion rates have increased across all student groups, and nearly doubled for Pell recipients.
- The gap between African-American students and white students has closed by 10 percentage points.
- Developmental mathematics and English completion rates have increased across all student groups.

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Representatives from Achieving the Dream, American Association of Colleges and Universities, Aspen Institute's College Excellence Program, Jobs for the Future, MDC, MDRC, and the University of Wisconsin System served on the selection committee that reviewed 2015 Leah Meyer Austin Award applications.

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**Achieving the Dream, Inc.**, is a national nonprofit that is 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: 1) guiding evidence-based institutional improvement, 2) leading policy change, 3) generating knowledge, and 4) engaging the public. Conceived as an initiative in 2004 by Lumina Foundation and seven founding partner organizations, today, Achieving the Dream is leading the most comprehensive non-governmental reform network for student success in higher education history. With over 200 institutions, more than 100 coaches and advisors, and 15 state policy teams – working throughout 34 states and the District of Columbia – the Achieving the Dream National Reform Network helps nearly 4 million community college students have a better chance of realizing greater economic opportunity and achieving their dreams.