RESULTS

Columbus State has made significant gains in increasing course success rates, retention, program completion, and narrowing equity gaps.

- Currently, 97 percent of new students participate in one or more student success initiatives, with involvement in a minimum of three serving as a tipping point to raise course success rates above 70 percent.

- The course success gap between Black students and White students has narrowed from 22 percent in 2011-12 to 14 percent in 2017-18.

- Furthermore, the college has seen the biggest gains in semester-to-semester retention of students who participate in three or more success initiatives among Black students. From fall 2014 to spring 2015, the retention rate was 68 percent for Black students and 83 percent for White students. Three years later, the rates were, respectively, 81 percent and 84 percent, and a 15 percentage-point gap had narrowed to 3 points.

- College wide, the IPEDS graduation rate increased more than 2.5 times the 2010-11 rate, from 8 percent to 21 percent.

- Columbus State Community College aggressively pursued dual-credit enrollment among at-risk high school populations who were underrepresented in the statewide program. Since 2012-13, the college has seen a 12-fold increase in the total number of high school students participating in dual-credit programs and a fivefold increase among underrepresented students.

3-Year Graduation and Graduation + Transfer Out Rates (First-Time, Full-Time Only)

Fall Cohort Year	Graduation Only	Graduation + Transfer Out
2007	8%	21%
2008	7%	28%
2009	8%	30%
2010	9%	33%
2011	8%	32%
2012	11%	32%
2013	15%	36%
2014	21%	40%

— Graduation Only   --- Graduation + Transfer Out

NEXT STEPS

Looking forward, Columbus State has continued its Achieving the Dream work as a Leader College and plans to further improve the student experience by fully implementing Guided Pathways, creating an enterprise structure for the 115 different information technology systems it is using, and by designing more flexible curricular offerings to address working students' difficulties with the state mandated semester calendar system. At the heart of these efforts are four new design principles for student success:

1. All students will have a clear understanding of their individualized paths to success.

2. All students' academic, financial, and career plans will be aligned with their goals and filled with clear, comprehensive information on how to succeed, complete, and transition.

3. All students will receive timely, frequent, customized feedback, access to resources, and structured interventions through organized, integrated systems.

4. All students will experience a culture of care reflecting our institutional values and designed to eliminate equity gaps.

> "People need an affordable, quality college that leads to good jobs. Columbus State is the answer. Columbus State was a great education. I graduated and transferred to Ohio State. Now I have two degrees and saved more than $20,000. Columbus State prepares so many people for good jobs right here in Central Ohio. They're paving the way to our region's future and that's good for everybody. Thanks Columbus State, you're making us stronger."
>
> —Danielle Sanborn, Admissions Representative & Alumna

Achieving the Dream™

2019 | LEAH MEYER AUSTIN AWARD

COLUMBUS STATE COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Achieving the Dream's **Leah Meyer Austin Award** is the highest honor a college in the Achieving the Dream Network can earn. The award recognizes institutional strength, aligned policies and procedures, a student-focused culture, notable increases in student outcomes, and reduction of equity gaps.

> "We've become a real data-seeking environment (through Achieving the Dream), and not just at the leadership level, but throughout each of our academic and student-facing departments."
>
> —Dr. David Harrison, President

OVERVIEW

Columbus State Community College, one of two winners of the 2019 Leah Meyer Austin Award, is being recognized for its focus on student success and its goal of creating a seamless path from high school through to the workforce.

Internally, the college has produced significant gains in course completion, retention, graduation rates, and narrowing equity gaps. College wide, the IPEDS graduation rate increased more than 2.5 times the 2010-11 rate, from 8 percent to 21 percent. More broadly, Columbus State Community College has advanced two other strategic priorities, workforce development and civic engagement, by building key partnerships with high schools, universities, and local industries. It also has been a leader in convening the Central Ohio Compact, a collective strategy aimed at ensuring that 65 percent of the region's adults will have earned a postsecondary certificate or degree by 2025.

Overall, Columbus State's transformative work reflects Achieving the Dream's vision of community colleges as crucial, lifelong sources of civic and economic wellbeing for individuals, their families, and their communities.

Annually, Columbus State Community College serves 46,000 students. Three-quarters (74 percent) attend part time and nearly two-thirds (64 percent) are 24 years old or younger. The student population is 59 percent White, 19 percent Black, 5 percent Hispanic, and 4 percent Asian; 47 percent of first-time, full-time beginning students receive Pell Grants as do 29 percent of the entire school population.

CHALLENGES

In 2010, the city of Columbus and the surrounding Franklin County community were dealing with the effects of the Great Recession. Many out-of-work adults or workers who needed new skills had turned to Columbus State Community College, swelling enrollments and forcing the college administration to focus on finding extra classrooms, faculty, and resources. In addition, Columbus State was taking in more traditional-aged students, more than half of whom, *The Columbus Dispatch* reported, were not college-ready and needed developmental education courses. This news alarmed taxpayers and the education and business communities alike.

At Columbus State, an active board and engaged faculty and staff were pushing to focus more attention on student success. The college had just completed a year-long Foundations in Excellence grant to strengthen the first-year student experience. The board had hired a new president, and some board members had accompanied him to a two-and-a-half-day retreat, the Governance Institute for Student Success. They brought with them college compliance data, some of which they had not seen nor analyzed before. The deep look at the data was concerning. The institution's first-time, full-time student three-year graduation rate was 8 percent. More than half of incoming students placed into at least one developmental course. Fall-to-fall persistence rates were weak: only 49 percent of full-time students who enrolled in 2012 returned the following fall. For part-time students, the retention rate was 32 percent. Perhaps most challenging of all, the data raised more questions than they answered. What was behind those poor outcomes and what could the college do about it?

SOLUTIONS

"We were a data-poor institution," recalls Columbus State Community College President Dr. David Harrison. "We had a lot of good work happening, deep in the organization, but we lacked an integrating framework." The college immediately started to invest in data and analysis systems, creating an Office of Institutional Effectiveness and hiring a director. And, in 2012, it made the pivotal decision to join Achieving the Dream.

Early on, the college benefitted from its Achieving the Dream coaches, who played a prominent role in helping the college grasp the big picture of the student experience and associated outcomes. "The discipline that Achieving the Dream required around data was an important catalyst for us

because it created external accountability," says Dr. Harrison. "It gave us deadlines to get things done, and then a cohort of colleges to compare ourselves to. These were the early-stage foundational elements to our student success strategy."

Achieving the Dream's focus on equity was also a beacon. When he arrived at Columbus State, Dr. Harrison launched a listening tour, visiting with high schools, district superintendents, universities, and local businesses and industry. He learned that no matter whether the regional economy was in boom or bust, lower-income citizens and people of color were disproportionately left behind. Better preparing all Franklin County high school graduates to be college- and work-ready was a central concern.

With the impetus of Achieving the Dream, the college created a Student Success Council that included broad, high-level representation across the offices of Academic Affairs, Institutional Effectiveness, and Student Affairs. Columbus State built further campus-wide engagement by gathering input from more than 200 faculty, staff, and students in forums, focus groups, and brainstorming sessions. From their recommendations emerged four student success priorities for 2012: closing equity gaps; increasing rates of course success; increasing student retention; and increasing program completion.

Through its increased data capacity and scaled holistic student support interventions, Columbus State has embedded those priorities into its operations. The interventions include application improvements, orientation processes, curriculum redesign, embedded advising, Early Alert, diversity awareness, student engagement, nonacademic supports, budget alignment, facility improvements, adjunct faculty development, and business process improvements. All interventions have evaluation plans, and data about their outcomes are available for college employees to see. The goal is to align functions, processes, and technology around the student experience rather than expecting busy students to adapt.

Ramping up student success interventions

Today, the college has more than 50 interventions, large and small, many reflecting Achieving the Dream's promising practices. Targeted "to make help unavoidable," as Dr. Harrison puts it, they range from mandatory orientation, a student success course, online and peer tutoring, the establishment of a student-facing Student Central office to provide cohesive enrollment, registration, and financial aid services to reaching out to foster youth networks and low-income students. The college found that when students experience three or more interventions, they are retained at higher rates and equity gaps narrow. Reaching out even before students may be thinking of college, Columbus State dramatically expanded a high school-college dual-credit enrollment program, College Credit Plus, and particularly targeted underserved students.

The most far-reaching intervention was Early Alert, created as part of a Title III grant implementation, and now a conduit to other interventions. It combines students' historical data with classroom performance data and makes the information available to instructors, advisors, financial aid counselors,

and students. It sends intentionally designed messages at certain trigger points, conveying kudos, reminders, and timely tips about help or available support options. Access to Early Alert was recently opened to allow high schools to follow how their dual enrollment students are doing.

Advancing equity

The college has used data to better understand the needs of underrepresented populations. It has honed practices needed to close equity gaps and achieve equitable outcomes by embedding completion advisors within program areas, offering college-readiness boot camps, designing new mathematics pathways, and introducing contextualized courses. The college has acted proactively to address regional and national cultural and political stress points by sponsoring a year-long community dialogue called "Courageous Conversations," which have dealt with race and ethnicity and how they relate to topics such as education, healthcare, criminal justice, immigration, and more. Students have also benefited from a grant-funded financial stability initiative.
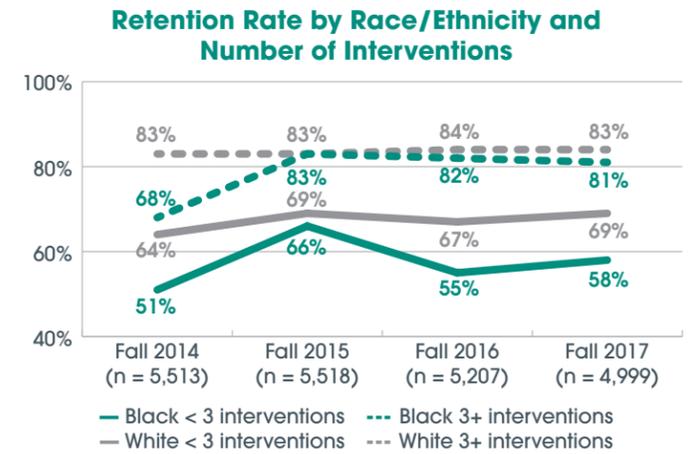
Fostering connection

The college communicates its student success vision widely, through its strategic plan, an updated website, and distribution of the Columbus State Community College Completion Plan (http://bit.ly/2Hu5NwM). The Office of Student Academic Success holds theme-based student focus groups two or three times a semester, reaching out in particular to underserved populations. Paid student workers call students who have earned credits but not returned to find out why. The office aggregates and shares what it learns. Staff and faculty habitually connect with students, letting them know they really belong at Columbus State Community College, and that the college will get them where they need to go. The college has revamped campus spaces to create informal places for students to study, collaborate, and hang out between classes.

Redesigning developmental education

To bolster underprepared students' ability to earn college credits and promote semester-to-semester persistence, the college recently redesigned developmental education on a co-requisite course model, first in English, and in 2017-18 in math. Students take college-level gateway courses and receive individualized or embedded tutoring for the developmental work they need to master. The results look promising, although it's too early to report hard data. Meanwhile, the developmental education department work has been merged into content-area departments, and faculty and staff have participated in related, large-scale professional development.

Unleashing the power of partnerships

The Central Ohio economy is diverse and growing, providing jobs for skilled workers in the financial, healthcare, and manufacturing industries. As an outgrowth of Dr. Harrison's conversations with education and business leaders in the region, Columbus State convened a series of facilitated forums involving 150 to 200 people over 18 months. This

Retention Rate by Race/Ethnicity and Number of Interventions

— Black < 3 interventions ‑ ‑ Black 3+ interventions
— White < 3 interventions ‑ ‑ ‑ White 3+ interventions

> "We're working to make sure that everybody has a path to the good jobs that do exist here. Frankly, that's something that at the community college we feel personally responsible for."
>
> —Dr. David Harrison, President

led, in 2011, to the creation of the Central Ohio Compact, a coalition of more than 50 school districts, universities, and employers committed to the understanding that "regional prosperity is tied to student success, and it can be achieved through the collaboration of education and industry players." The Compact is a vehicle for K-12, higher education, and industry players to seamlessly collaborate. In addition to convening the Compact, the college launched and maintains a regional dashboard, integrating data from state, high school, postsecondary, and employer sources. Columbus State Community College also has formed a workforce advisory council made up of chief talent officers of Central Ohio companies. It is creating a similar community advisory board to facilitate community responses to students' nonacademic barriers.

A significant collaboration to grow out of the Compact is the Modern Manufacturing Work-Study program, designed and customized to address locally based Honda North America's need for a talent pool of workers who can keep up with rapid technological change. In the accelerated learning program, high school students graduate with 18 college credits, attend two semesters at Columbus State Community College, then split the final 12-15 months between the college classroom and on-the-job activities while they earn a salary. The college has extended a tailored form of this model to other companies in the region.