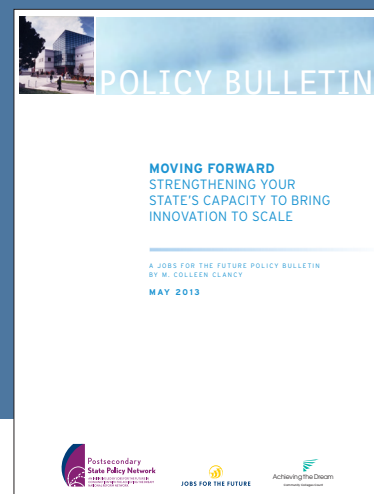


# MOVING FORWARD

## STRENGTHENING YOUR STATE'S CAPACITY TO BRING INNOVATION TO SCALE

A JOBS FOR THE FUTURE POLICY BULLETIN  
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

BY M. COLLEEN CLANCY  
MAY 2013



Evidence-based innovations developed locally can have a powerful and broad impact on a state's student success agenda, but only when a system is in place for accelerating the diffusion of innovation across institutional lines. State leadership is key to bringing effective practices to scale. That is what is happening in North Carolina, Texas, and Virginia, which are using both existing and new resources to support and build on the efforts of their colleges.

All three states participate in Jobs for the Future's Postsecondary State Policy Network, which includes 11 states that are focused on improving student success, in conjunction with the Achieving the Dream National Reform Network. These states receive technical and policy assistance, with support from Achieving the Dream, Completion by Design, and the Student Success Center initiative.

## A SYSTEMATIC WAY TO ACCELERATE CHANGE

*Moving Forward* describes how the three states have improved their capacity to accelerate change and pursue a student success agenda, presenting a systematic way to assess the strengths of the existing state infrastructure and determine what needs to be done to enhance, diffuse, and sustain it.

### STEP 1: FILL THE LEADERSHIP ROLE ONE OR MORE ORGANIZATIONS STEP UP TO LEAD THE EFFORT.

All states can point to community colleges that are finding innovative ways to improve student outcomes, and all states have organizations that support such efforts. North Carolina, Texas, and Virginia have something more: In each case, state organizations have taken on the express mission of organizing and extending community college reforms. These lead organizations are connected not only to the community colleges but also to influential executive and legislative policymakers. They bring vision, structure, and relationships to the mission of improving student outcomes.

### STEP 2: MAP CRITICAL ALLIES THE LEAD ORGANIZATIONS IDENTIFY AND BUILD RELATIONSHIPS WITH IMPORTANT STAKEHOLDERS.

To accelerate the work of improving student outcomes, North Carolina, Texas, and Virginia have strategically mapped the existing educational infrastructure, and they use the result to ensure that information and action flow throughout the community college system. The goal is to identify key allies and bring them into a communication network so that all partners can prepare an effective advocacy strategy. Visualizing community colleges and educational organizations as places on a map, the lead organization builds communication "roads" that connect them.

### STEP 3: BUILD MOMENTUM FOR CHANGE THE LEAD ORGANIZATIONS AND ALLIES USE AN INFORMATION NETWORK THAT PROMOTES WIDESPREAD ENGAGEMENT.

In Step 2, the lead organizations and allies have "connected the dots" by and between stakeholders in the work of innovation. Dialog within this informed network leads to a shared agenda. Strategic conversations deploy existing and new communications resources to:

- Accelerate the pace of innovation by sharing practices and results;
- Inform participants about the work of other organizations in the network;

- Share state and local data to help frame issues;
- Share recommendations on proposals for change;
- Build consensus on moving effective practices to scale; and
- Report on progress in the reform process.

#### STEP 4: SUSTAIN CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT THE LEAD ORGANIZATIONS AND ALLIES REPORT ON, DIFFUSE, AND ACCELERATE EVIDENCE-BASED INNOVATION.

States increasingly seek ways to create a cycle of continuous improvement in and expansion of the work as they gain experience with the process of innovation, and as data on the extent of the problem to be addressed and the impact of reforms become ever more convincing. With an ongoing system of data collection and reporting, the lead organizations and allies promote continuous improvement in student outcomes throughout the state. This represents a culture shift, a recognition that reform is a developmental process that has to be evaluated and adjusted as implementation progresses.

States in the forefront of community college reform are also in the forefront of creating the infrastructure to sustain and extend their innovations. Texas, Virginia, and North Carolina provide examples of how states are building this capacity:

- In Texas, leadership teams, composed of college faculty and administrators, are the hub of a network to review program developments, assess results, and recommend improvements.
- In Virginia, a statewide team of faculty and administrators visited all 23 community colleges to identify outcomes, lessons, and challenges in the implementation of the developmental math redesign.

- North Carolina's State Board of Community Colleges endorsed SuccessNC, a planning initiative to foster policies and practices that improve student success that coordinates and aligns the state's student improvement initiatives.

## TOWARD TRANSFORMATION

Texas, North Carolina, and Virginia, along with their peers in the Postsecondary State Policy Network, are moving innovation beyond local efforts by enhancing the state capacity to promote statewide engagement, disseminate knowledge, and engage in collaborative problem solving. The three states have different governing systems and are exploring options tailored to their community college systems. Nevertheless, their efforts to build consensus share strategies that outline a model for promoting systemic change.

These states have learned the importance of building connections with and among all community college stakeholders to arrive at consensus solutions. They have organized the work strategically to maximize and diffuse success. They are taking advantage of the resources available in their states and working with national partners to connect their efforts to cross-state initiatives. As innovation matures, effective, proven solutions are emerging to transform the way community colleges improve student completion rates, and states are beginning to transform the way that colleges and other stakeholders talk to one another in that effort.

---

**DOWNLOAD THIS PUBLICATION** at <http://www.jff.org/publications/education/moving-forward-strengthening-your-states/1529>

---

**JOBS FOR THE FUTURE** works with our partners to design and drive the adoption of education and career pathways leading from college readiness to career advancement for those struggling to succeed in today's economy.

[WWW.JFF.ORG](http://WWW.JFF.ORG)

**ACHIEVING THE DREAM** is a national nonprofit leading the nation's most comprehensive non-governmental reform network for student success in higher education history. The Achieving the Dream National Reform Network, including nearly 200 institutions, more than 100 coaches and advisors, and 15 state policy teams—working throughout 32 states and the District of Columbia—helps 3.75 million community college students have a better chance of realizing greater economic opportunity and achieving their dreams.

[WWW.ACHIEVINGTHEDREAM.ORG](http://WWW.ACHIEVINGTHEDREAM.ORG)

#### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

**M. Colleen Clancy, J.D.**, is a policy advocate and the founder of PROMOTE-EDU, a consultancy that conducts research and policy analysis to support the efforts of community college students to succeed. Clancy has worked on projects for FutureWorks, Year Up, and the Seattle Jobs Initiative, among other organizations. She was a community college administrator in Washington and Oregon and earned an A.B. in sociology and a law degree from the University of California, Berkeley.