FAQ’s about Achieving The Dream

1. What is Achieving the Dream (AtD)?
Achieving the Dream (AtD) is a nationwide initiative which seeks to identify barriers to student achievement and then implement college-wide strategies for addressing these obstacles. Harbor College is one of more than 100 colleges participating in this national movement, and Harbor has worked to immediately identify strategies for improving student success, closing achievement gaps, and increasing retention, persistence, and completion rates.

2. What is AtD at Harbor College doing to assist students to succeed?
With thoughtful planning and the use of relevant data, the CORE and Data teams established three intervention proposals for the 2012-2013 academic year. The first plan is Front Door Success program. Achieving The Dream in concert with Title V have designed and implemented a First Year Experience program (FYE). The other two interventions are Implementing Strategies for Developmental Math Sequence and the Cultural Equity Awareness intervention.

3. What are the expected outcomes of Achieving the Dream?
Achieving the Dream must show measurable improvements in success rates among the identified groups and must show progress in closing achievement gaps. As a result, Harbor College will seek to help more students reach their individual goals and to increase the percentage of students who accomplish the following: Successfully complete courses in which they attempt with a grade of C or better; Advance from developmental courses to credit-bearing and transfer courses; Successfully complete gatekeeper courses Persist from semester to semester and year to year; Earn degrees and/or certificated courses.

4. How is Achieving the Dream relevant to my work with students?
Achieving the Dream is about student success. As administrators, faculty, and staff, we must all work towards making Harbor College an institution of change and put forth the effort to improve the processes and procedures that will lead to student success. If need be, we must all work toward establishing new policies that will assist all our students. What is more important is that all of us must take responsibility for making change a priority. If we open our doors to all students, then all of us must take care to help them be a part of the college and make them know that we are here to help them succeed.

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Cultural equity, the inclusion of cultural groups who have been traditionally denied access and resources, seeks at its core, social justice. The cultural equity intervention for AtD, in turn, seeks to address two issues identified through research findings in LAHC’s Fact Books and the AtD Data Team’s focus groups.

First, while 75% of our student population is comprised of students of color, campus programs that address cultural identity and awareness have lacked coordination and dissemination across the college.

Second, our student retention and success rates have been lowest for African American men and women and Latino men; additionally, many of our Pacific Islander students come from Carson, the largest Pacific Islander population outside of American Samoa, yet they’ve lacked a cultural home at Harbor. This fall, we will begin faculty and staff professional development around a core issue faced by many students: poverty.

An interactive fex workshop has been planned to expose faculty to the realities of many students struggling to get into and stay in college and what resources are available to them. Additional activities will take place through the College Hour and involve the Associated Student Organization (ASO) leadership. We are looking to send both students and faculty and staff to the A2MEND and Umoja conferences.

We also look forward to a visit from Chief Feletago of the Samoan Federation as part of cultural pride activities being developed. For more information, call (310) 233-4513.

Throughout the spring 2012 semester, AtD First Year Experience Sub-Committee members, co-chaired by Retention Counselor Daniel Ruiz and Title V Program Director Andrew Sanchez, have worked diligently with key campus constituencies to develop and implement the First Door Success Intervention for new incoming first-time college students. The initiative’s success is bolstered by the First Year Experience program (FYE) which was created to enact systemic institutional improvement to address the issue of year-to-year persistence and degree completion or transfer for select Los Angeles Harbor College students.

Quantitative and qualitative institutional data suggests that African American males; Hispanic males; White males; and African American Females are populations on campus that have the lowest retention, success and completion rates. Harbor College’s AtD Front Door Success Intervention seeks to improve these concerning findings.

Through the alignment of multiple college resources, and in collaboration with the college’s Title V grant, activities to address improvements around student success and completion have begun. In May 2012 the FYE program embarked on a recruitment campaign. Over 250 new students were invited to participate in the program.

In June the FYE program hosted a pre-orientation meeting where students were informed of the program’s details and participation requirements. Students learned about a robust menu of services that would be available to them, including: academic courses; student success classes; advising and student support services; academic tutoring; financial literacy and financial advising; and community involvement activities that program participants will engage in throughout the duration of the program.

The LAHC WorkSource Center, located in the Student Services and Administration building, will open officially on September 13. Its purpose is to provide personalized one-on-one counseling for youths 14 to 21 years of age. Adriana Dillon, one of the three Career Guidance Counseling Assistants in the Center, reports that “The Center will offer career assessment and job readiness training for those youths referred from the Los Angeles Unified School District.”

Along with the counseling, LAUSD provides a social worker who helps with truancy prevention and retention. The center is also staffed with a part-time academic counselor, Angelica Villalpando.

Sandra Sanchez, the Dean of Economic and Workforce Development, and Merci Yanez, Associate Dean, EOP & CARE oversee the grant and the function of the WorkSource Center. They will work in partnership with LAUSD and the community to help these at-risk youths. If a youth is not eligible for the program, the Center will assist in finding other eligible programs that the college or the community may ofer. Visit the WorkSource Center in SSA 113 or call (310) 233-4097.

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Financial Literacy Program

The EDC and Workforce Development Of ce entered into a Work Source Center grant that will provide youths the necessary skills to successfully transition into career and further their education. The goal of the grant is to assist 500 youths in its fi rst year.

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