ACHIEVING THE DREAM

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

1.   What is the Dream?   Is it graduation, student success, learning a skill, completion, transfer?

All of the above. The Achieving the Dream (ATD) network includes any strategies or processes used to help students succeed. Basically, ATD is really a synonym for student success.

2.   Why did Calhoun choose to do this program? Improve graduation rates? Be part of a national organization?

Calhoun joined the ATD network to improve student success in all areas including graduation rates, retention rates, and course success rates.

3.   What is the timeline? How many years does this go on? When will the plan be implemented?

Calhoun signed a 3-year commitment to join the ATD network in spring 2014. Year 1 (2014-15) is the planning year where data is collected, analyzed and reviewed so that the College can identify achievement gaps in specific populations and develop an implementation plan for areas of focus in Years 2 (2015-16) and 3 (2016-17).

4.   Is there a cost?

Yes, the College committed to pay $75,000 per year over a 3-year period for a total investment of $225,000.

5.   What is needed from our area to support the ATD effort?

All that is needed to support ATD is a commitment to help students. If you work in security, it means that you help students feel safe on campus so that they can concentrate on their coursework; if you work in Financial Aid or Admissions, it means that you help students understand what is needed to complete the FAFSA or registration processes. Student success impacts all areas of the College.

6.   What is the role of non-instructional department/divisions/employees who do not have intentional contact with students?

There are a large number of employees who work diligently behind the scenes to ensure students have a safe, clean, and comfortable learning environment. Another good example of working behind the scenes is the Information Technology Department. IT staff are rarely seen by students; however, the network infrastructure is used extensively by students and employees 24/7. Without the support of these critical areas, students could not be successful.

7.   What is the overriding vision or specific target goals? For example, is there a specific graduation % target?

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The need for improvement was very clear in the data presented at Inservice on February 24, 2015. Specific targets and goals will be identified by the ATD Core Team by the end of Year 1 after data has been analyzed. One gap already identified is the need for improvement in student completion rates. Calhoun's current three-year graduation rate is 13% while the national average for community colleges is 21%.

8.   Is ATD info tied back to departmental goals/college goals? What measures are we taking to ensure ATD aligns with those goals?

Yes. Calhoun's vision is "Success for every student." Each department will have the opportunity to establish college-wide goals through a comprehensive, interactive planning process beginning late spring. The core principles of ATD and Calhoun's vision clearly align.

9.   The survey seemed to pose more of the questions on instruction. Is the problem focused only on instruction?

Student success is everyone's business. Of course, teaching and learning is the heart of what we do at Calhoun. Students spend most of their time in the classroom, but they need lots of support systems in place to help them succeed outside of the classroom. Advising is one of those areas where students need increased support, and Calhoun is committed to putting additional resources in place to better serve students.

10.   How are students assessed for ATD? What pre-screening skills/risks factors are involved in ATD?

There is no "assessment" for ATD services. The College's data have been submitted to ATD so that students can be tracked over a 3-year period. ATD analyzes the data using sub-groups such as gender, race, ethnicity, age, etc. to allow the College to put strategies in place to help "bridge the gaps" identified in the sub-groups. ATD helps the college implement college-wide improvements. ATD is not implemented on an individual student basis.

11.   What results have other colleges had with ATD?

The ATD network posts reports from member colleges on their website (http://achievingthedream.org). Results vary from college to college; however, many colleges have reported increased success in developmental courses, retention, and graduation rates.