



Dear President Russell:

Thank you for being an Achieving the Dream Institution and for putting what we know is a tremendous amount of effort into improving student success. After reviewing your 2013 Annual Reflection and discussing it with your coaching team, we appreciate the opportunity through this letter to provide feedback and comment on the college's progress this past year. For your convenience, this letter is arranged according to the five broad principles that Achieving the Dream views as keys to institutional transformation. After reviewing our comments, please feel free to discuss these observations with your coaches or with our Achieving the Dream staff, should you have questions.

We offer congratulations once again on the successful vote to expand the taxing district, increased fundraising and restoring the college to financial stability and good standing with SACS and on attaining ATD Leader College status, all in the wake of a severe fiscal and leadership crisis.

We are encouraged by TC's progress in implementing the Achieving the Dream model in the following ways:

Committed Leadership

We recognize this has been a particularly challenging year as budget cuts and difficult choices had to be made. It is impressive that you were able to make the necessary personnel adjustments while maintaining a high level of campus morale, effectively balancing the budget and were removed from accreditation sanctions so quickly. The leadership you and members of the faculty and staff exhibit have been exceptional.

Use of Evidence to Improve Policies, Programs, and Services

We commend you and your leadership team for your deep commitment to the use of evidence in decision making and your reflections report supports this assertion. The launch of dashboard resources through the myTC portal is an important accomplishment, making more data consistently available to more people. We note that all campus professional development activities now include data updates, and we laud you for this commitment to a culture of evidence and inquiry. Also encouraging is the integration of data requirements to serve institutional, ATD, state, and accreditation efforts simultaneously. Your practice of having departments routinely review student success on a class-by-class and instructor-by-instructor basis is one we would like to see emulated elsewhere. We urge TC to submit a proposal to Orlando's DREAM 2014 describing this practice and how you use the data.

Broad Engagement

It is impressive to see how quickly TC has involved the majority of its full-time faculty in implementing cooperative learning, an indication that faculty feel broadly involved and empowered. The recent move to a faculty advising program should strengthen this engagement and the initial "results" are impressive. Your emphasis on transparency within the college and

throughout the community is notable. By communicating clearly with many segments of the community it was possible to show the value of Texarkana College and garner increased support, both financially and for other purposes. We anticipate this will help in establishing support networks and outreach to other parts of the community to increase enrollment and identify ways to understand students' needs.

Systemic Institutional Improvement

We applaud TC's thoughtful and well-planned commitment to bringing the entire college community together around its interventions and rapidly bringing them to scale. We recognize this is a particular challenge when the institution has faced a significant financial problem – demonstrating that you truly do budgeting based on your expressed priorities. Also encouraging is the evidence of a strong commitment to continually improving and scaling these efforts. Expanding the student success course beyond its original, relatively narrow, target group to include all new students appears to be well on its way.

Equity

We appreciate TC's renewed effort to recruit Hispanic students and to better support their success by introducing an ESL program to assist with language development. The data in your reflections report show considerable success in closing performance gaps in English for both Hispanics and African American students but less success in math, particularly with Hispanics. TC's direction correlates closely with the data coming in from our other ATD colleges which indicate a close correlation between reading/language skills and math proficiency. We look forward to seeing how your math redesign affects performance among your minority populations.

We recognize that improving student outcomes can be both rewarding and challenging. As Texarkana College plans for the coming year, we encourage you to take a closer look at the following:

Committed Leadership

We strongly encourage you and your leadership team to continue to focus on ways to improve student success through the interventions the institution has committed to. The communication approaches that you have planned in the coming year appear promising and we encourage you to follow through on these, but with an almost complete change in senior administration, this will be a challenge. This may particularly be the case when many of the new leaders come from other sectors of education. They will be on a steep learning curve where communication and cooperation become all the more critical.

Use of Evidence to Improve Policies, Programs, and Services

We encourage TC to address the challenges with TC's data system during this past year that slowed ability to implement accelerated math and a scaling-up of the student success course. A challenge will be ensuring that the support systems needed to get students properly placed do not continue to impede your ability to move forward as you have planned.

Broad Engagement

We are sensitive to the burden and difficulties TC has to face in order to maintain high levels of morale and engagement when faculty have been carrying heavier loads for reduced pay and begin to feel that college finances are returning to normal. ATD is increasingly interested in case studies that demonstrate how leader colleges can successfully address difficult challenges. We will be very interested in seeing how you manage this transition.

Equity

We strongly encourage TC's effort to recruit a greater percentage of your Hispanic population, as well as support efforts through creation of an ESL program.

As a Leader College, we hope you will find ways to share your broader transformation story with others. Please consider submitting a proposal to share TC's transformation work at a DREAM 2014 workshop.

As you know, this is a critical time for all of us who are committed to the mission of community colleges. We need to be focused and strategic in our work if we are to create clear and meaningful pathways for our students as they strive toward success. It is our belief that by working together, as a community of learners, practitioners and citizens, we can set high standards and help our students achieve their goals.

We appreciate the time, resources, and hard work that you and your faculty and staff have devoted to your Achieving the Dream efforts. We look forward to working with you in the coming year and to seeing you at DREAM 2014.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Carol A. Lincoln". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned below the word "Sincerely,".