



Achieving the Dream™

James Henry Russell
President
Texarkana College
2500 N. Robison,
Texarkana, TX 75599

Dear President Russell:

Achieving the Dream has completed its first twelve years of gathering data and determining what works in order to improve college completion rates, especially for our most vulnerable students. We are deeply appreciative of you and your colleagues' continued commitment. In particular, your institution's work on teaching and learning, most notable bringing Learning Frameworks and Math Pathways to scale, is a testament to its dedication to student success. We have worked closely with your coaching team to provide observations on your institution's progress over the past academic year. We hope this letter will help guide Texarkana College as your team continues to work towards its student-centered goals.

Accomplishments

As we reflect on all of your work over the past year and your plans going forward, we are most impressed by these accomplishments.

- The college is to be commended for integrating the SACSCOC accreditation QEP with the ATD work. The college has three goals and three interventions which provide a realistic and well-integrated approach to student success.
- We further commend the college's emphasis on teaching and learning, which is clearly evident in engagement in the classroom, as well as the reform of developmental education, the Learning Frameworks course, and the movement to guided pathways. That work is undergirded by a strong culture of evidence, illustrated by faculty leading "Data Bytes" summits and the college's well-developed data dashboards.
- The college's continued work on Integrated Planning and Advising for Student Success (iPASS) is laudable. We greatly value your team's engagement in and contribution to peer learning as an iPASS community member.
- We applaud the high level of transparency within the institution and with external stakeholders, which promotes trust in the college. The inclusion of many people in decision making and the opportunity for voices to be heard creates a comfort level that enables stakeholders to raise issues and propose improvements. That in turn provides a strong foundation for moving the college forward.

Areas for Improvement and Next Steps

We recognize that the distinct environment of each college poses unique challenges and opportunities. In terms of next steps, we would like to suggest the following as possible ways to improve student outcomes over the next year.



Achieving the Dream™

- The college is making progress in developing pathways. To help advance that work, we encourage the college to continue to develop pathways as an integrated, system-wide approach to student success based on intentionally designed, clear, coherent, and structured educational experiences that lead to attainment of high-quality credentials and careers. Consider developing pathways in concert with high school endorsements to align the pathways from high school through postsecondary education, and suggest being part of the Texas Pathways Project. You may also consider utilizing the Texas Completes model of connection, entry, progression, completion, and entry into the workforce or transfer to help map interventions in each stage of student progression and ascertain gaps or bottlenecks in the student pathway.
- Now that the college has made significant progress on several fronts in regard to student success, we suggest you move some student success interventions off the table to focus more energy on strategic priorities for integrated interventions. For example, Active and Cooperative Learning is now part of the pedagogical strategy infused in the college's learning culture. The college will want to monitor that and other infused interventions, but is positioned to now focus strategic attention on other efforts aimed at student success.

Final Thoughts

We understand that Texarkana College faces significant financial issues and increased competition from other postsecondary institutions in the immediate area. Especially in light of those challenges, we commend you, the college's board of trustees, and the leadership team for focusing on improving the college-going culture and higher education attainment in the community. The broad engagement of all stakeholders and the transparency of student, institutional, and community successes and challenges provides a degree of systemic change that is being infused throughout the college and the community.

We encourage you to discuss these observations with your coaching team and look forward to continuing our work together. We also welcome your campus team's feedback as we work to support innovative institutions such as yours.

Congratulations to you and your team on another year of excellent work and hard-earned progress toward your student success goals. With the rollout of the new institutional capacity framework, it is an exciting time to be a part of Achieving the Dream. Your dedication to transformation is what gives our network its vitality. As I stated at DREAM, our journey is not a linear one; in the Achieving the Dream Network, we continue to learn from our efforts and from each other.

Sincerely,

Dr. Karen A. Stout
President & CEO