



August 8, 2008

John Morton
Vice President for Community Colleges
University of Hawaii Community Colleges
2327 Dole Street
Honolulu, HI 87302

Dear John:

Congratulations on a successful planning year. We're thrilled to be working with your institution for four more years!

I am writing to provide information on what you can expect from the Achieving the Dream partnership and what is expected of your institution as a demonstration site. This letter also includes comments on your implementation proposal.

What You Can Expect from the Achieving the Dream Partnership

Coaching and Data Facilitation: Your institution will receive continuing assistance from a coach and a data facilitator over the next four years. The level of support from these resource people will gradually decline over time, but in the coming year, you can anticipate receiving up to 12 days of support from each of these individuals. They will continue to work with your core team and data team and will make on-site visits and maintain frequent telephone and e-mail communication with you and your team.

Communicating with the Partners: The Partners of the initiative strive to keep your coach and data facilitator up to date on all aspects of Achieving the Dream. We also strive to use the coach as the main communicator with your college so that you receive clear and consistent messages. Whenever you have a question, please ask your coach first, but do not hesitate to contact others in the Partnership when you need more specific help or information. You may always contact MDC at atd@mdcinc.org, the managing partner for Achieving the Dream, on any matter and we will strive to help you or to direct you to the appropriate Partner or resource.

Communications Support: Through our communications office at MDC and with the support of our national consultants at Lipman Hearne, we provide a range of communications services for Achieving the Dream institutions. In addition to providing networking for public information officers, training, and materials such

as press release templates, we are available as a general resource to help you promote your work on campus and in the media.

Optional Workshops: From time to time, the Achieving the Dream partners may host an optional workshop or training session on topics of interest to several or all Achieving the Dream institutions. You may use funds from your implementation budget to support the participation of staff from your institution.

Feedback on Lessons from the Initiative: We are building a strong community of learners committed to the issue of student success. Achieving the Dream has an ambitious knowledge-development agenda that we anticipate will produce numerous documents and publications. These will be shared with participating colleges and others interested in student success.

Expectations of Colleges in Achieving the Dream

Presidential Leadership: We are convinced that your continuing involvement is crucial to the success of Achieving the Dream. We hope you will not only play a strong leadership role at your institution but also stay engaged with your peers through various networking opportunities we intend to facilitate, including an annual strategy institute for all participating colleges and various roundtable discussions for presidents scheduled during AACC conventions or other national gatherings of community college presidents. You have a wonderful opportunity as vice president to set an example for all the staff and students by dedicating time to work on the initiative and by regarding it as a high priority.

Strategy Institute: The initiative has an annual Achieving the Dream Strategy Institute for all institutions involved. You and at least two other members of your core team or data team are expected to participate. Please keep your calendar open for the next institute, which will take place over several consecutive days in early February. More information about the institute, including the exact dates, will be shared in the coming months.

Cohort Data: Your institution is required to make annual submissions of student cohort data to the national Achieving the Dream database. In return, you will have access to data from all the Achieving the Dream colleges for your own comparative analyses and consideration.

Online Reporting Tool: Earlier this year, Achieving the Dream made The Interventions to Improve Student Outcomes Online Tool available to all institutions. This tool will help your institution monitor the progress of your Achieving the Dream intervention strategies, and it will promote the sharing of promising practices with other Achieving the Dream institutions. In order to be recommended for continuing participation in FY 2009-10, Round Four institutions must enter information for the Fall 2008 term by April 30, 2009.

Communications and Publicity: We are interested in knowing when and how you share lessons from your work with others, locally and nationally. This includes stories about successes, strategies you are implementing, lessons learned, and challenges you are facing. We will also be looking for success stories we can put on the Achieving the Dream Web site or use in various media releases about the initiative. Please use the “add content” tool on the members-only section of AchievingTheDream.org to keep MDC and our communications consultants advised of your publicity and advocacy efforts, and to help us collect success stories and other news about your work.

More Comprehensive Work Plans and Evaluation Plans: We encourage you to continue working with your coach to develop a detailed work plan for the coming year. We also urge you to continue to develop and refine your evaluation plan with the help of your data facilitator. Achieving the Dream’s publication *Evaluation Guidelines For Achieving the Dream Institutions Rounds One through Four* (attached) outlines Achieving the Dream’s expectations for institutions’ evaluation of the activities, programs, reforms, and strategies they implement as part of Achieving the Dream.

Annual Narrative Reports: Achieving the Dream colleges are required to submit annual narrative reports. These reports should be submitted to MDC at atd@mdcinc.org by April 30th of each year. Guidelines for preparing these reports will be available to your institution by the beginning of February of each year.

Performance Policy Statement. (Attached) Achieving the Dream funders have endorsed a policy and procedures for addressing situations in which an Achieving the Dream institution is making less progress than desired. The performance policy statement reviews what has been said previously about expectations for participating institutions and describes the process the national partners will follow when there are concerns that an institution is not making adequate progress toward meeting those expectations.

Specific Feedback on Your Proposal

The University of Hawaii Community College System has presented a solid proposal that shows excitement about and commitment to the Achieving the Dream initiative. The proposal also shows us that the system has a firm understanding of the current rates of student success. We are pleased by the use of quantitative data throughout your proposal and your application of the data to align strategic planning goals with your Achieving the Dream priorities. The set of priorities that UHCC has identified are manageable, appropriate, and supported by the data presented in the proposal.

We offer three major suggestions for ways to strengthen your work:

- **More and deeper data analysis.** We recommend that your team continue with both quantitative and qualitative data analysis. This work is never really

done. There is always more to learn and understand. We note that while the quantitative data you present in the proposal are disaggregated by ethnicity, you did not mention disaggregating student outcome data by such variables as gender, income, first-time enrollee, and age. If you have not already conducted such analyses, they may deepen your insight into barriers and challenges faced by students at the various campuses. The additional level of disaggregation may also add perspective to the research and interventions used in the next phase of work. Another area that could be strengthened is your use of qualitative data. We suggest that the colleges conduct focus groups and/or interviews with the students and the external community over the next six months to deepen the core and data teams' understanding of factors contributing to student success or alternatively to lack of progress.

- **Deeper and broader engagement of key leaders and stakeholders.** Aligning the Strategic Plan of the system with your Achieving the Dream priorities bodes well for the success of the initiative in Hawaii. Equally important will be having support from key leadership, faculty, and staff. Our experience with the three rounds of Achieving the Dream institutions that have preceded Hawaii's participation is that one of the most critical conditions for success is having highly visible and strong support from top level leadership. In this regard, we urge the seven chief campus executives to make Achieving the Dream a high priority and to demonstrate their support for the work via frequent presentations to faculty and staff, robust engagement with the community about student success issues, and participation in key Achieving the Dream events both locally and nationally.

We acknowledge that the UHCC has invested significant resources in bringing team members to both the Kickoff Institute and the Strategy Institute. In the future, we hope you will find it possible to bring more of your campus executives, too. The 2009 institute may be a good opportunity since the west coast is likely to be the venue for that meeting. Your campus leaders will be invited to participate in the annual Presidents Forum (a half day meeting at the Strategy Institute) as well as to portions of the state policy team meetings that will be held during the same week in February.

As you think about ways to strengthen your engagement with faculty, students and the community, please remember that Achieving the Dream has several ongoing engagement pilot projects and resource materials that may prove useful to you. Two years ago, five colleges (Housatonic, Jefferson, Valencia, Alamo, and Norwalk) field tested a technique called Community Conversations, a methodology adapted by Public Agenda for identifying concerns and strategies that community members wanted the colleges to focus on. A toolkit from their demonstration work is available for downloading from the Achieving the Dream website at <http://www.achievingthedream.org/CAMPUSSTRATEGIES/RESOURCESFORCOLLEGES/default.tp> Other colleges (Gallup and South Texas) are currently testing strategies for building a strong college-community team that focuses on

long-term student success issues. Still others (Bunker Hill, Coastal Bend, Capital, and Cuyahoga) are piloting strategies for increasing student and faculty engagement. We recommend connecting with these sites to explore ways to apply their more successful strategies.

- **Continuing attention to evaluation.** We commend UHCC for its current and ongoing data collection and evaluation. Yet since there are seven colleges within the system, a potential area of concern lies within the scope of evaluation. Keys to successful evaluation efforts will be the generation and analysis of reliable data and expanding institutional research capacity. We recommend involving your IR office, data facilitator and data teams in the creation of a comprehensive system-wide evaluation plan. Along with the larger system-wide plan, each college will need to develop a plan that includes evaluation of each Achieving the Dream strategy. We encourage you to further develop your work plan and develop a timeline that includes a chart of goals for each intervention for each year of implementation. The evaluation plan should include what data will be collected and evaluated, who is responsible for the data collection and evaluation, when the evaluation will be conducted and what resources are needed for the evaluation of each intervention.

Final Thoughts

We appreciate the University of Hawaii's deep commitment to the Achieving the Dream initiative. This is evidenced by your strong presence at Achieving the Dream events and by your enthusiasm and work thus far.

Please do not hesitate to contact us at atd@mdcinc.org if you have concerns or issues. This includes letting us know if there are ways we, your coach, your data facilitator, or national partner organizations can improve to support your success. We are looking forward to a productive and rewarding partnership with you.

Sincerely,

Carol

Carol A. Lincoln
National Director
Achieving the Dream

Cc: Bernadine Fong, Coach
Bill Piland, Data Facilitator
Elizabeth Muller, MDC

Enclosure