

**NC STATE**  
UNIVERSITY

**Belk Center**  
for Community College  
Leadership and Research

**The Urgent Case:**  
Focusing the Next Generation  
of Community College Redesign  
on Teaching and Learning

**Dr. Karen A. Stout**

President and CEO,  
Achieving the Dream

2018 Dallas Herring Lecture  
November 28, 2018

**2018**  
**DALLAS HERRING LECTURE**

Dear Colleagues,

We are pleased to share with you the full transcript of the 2018 Dallas Herring Lecture, delivered by Dr. Karen A. Stout, the president and CEO of Achieving the Dream, Inc. It was delivered at the NC State College of Education's Friday Institute for Educational Innovation on Wednesday, Nov. 28, 2018. The 2018 lecture also marked the public launch of the Belk Center for Community College Leadership and Research at NC State.

As you will find, Dr. Stout makes a bold and unapologetic call for community college leaders to place a greater emphasis on teaching and learning, around which "institutional reform is long overdue." Dr. Stout lays out key guiding principles for community college leaders driving reform:

1. supporting and rewarding reflective practice;
2. establishing centers focused on teaching and learning at the crux of the college's organizational structure;
3. designing centers to honor the diversity and range of experiences among faculty;
4. meaningfully engaging part-time faculty; and
5. making teaching and learning integral to efforts to make their institutions student-centered.

Her call is one to join pioneers in the field like Achieving the Dream Network colleges, which are continually strengthening their institutional capacity by prioritizing in teaching and learning.

In the coming years, through the Belk Center for Community College Leadership and Research, we will address critical issues of teaching and learning. Graduate faculty and Ed.D. students will jointly explore and propose solutions to problems of practice relating to teaching, pedagogy and the student experience in the classroom. We anticipate this research to inform North Carolina community college leaders' taking up Dr. Stout's call and guiding principles for improving teaching and learning.

Our work in this area exemplifies the NC State College of Education's mission to improve the educational outcomes of all learners. Over two-thirds of our faculty are engaged in sponsored research endeavors, and they are leveraging over \$79 million in grants to transform the practice of teaching, learning and leading across North Carolina, the nation and the world. With the establishment of the Belk Center for Community College Leadership and Research, the NC State College of Education will expand our reach through enhancing our preparation of outstanding community college leaders and strengthening our support of community colleges.

Cordially,



Mary Ann Danowitz, D.Ed.  
Dean, College of Education  
NC State University



Audrey J. Jaeger, Ph.D.  
Alumni Distinguished Graduate Professor  
Executive Director, Belk Center for  
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## About Dr. Karen A. Stout

Since becoming president and CEO of Achieving the Dream in 2015, Dr. Karen A. Stout has led the growth and expansion of its national network of community colleges to include new initiatives in a number of areas critical to their ability to advance their goals. She has received national recognition for her accomplishments and achievements in higher education innovation and leadership including *Diverse: Issues in Higher Education's* 2018 Leading Women, American Association for Women in Community College's 2017 Woman of the Year, and *Washington Monthly's* 16 Most Innovative Higher Education Leaders in 2016.

Previously, Stout was president of Montgomery County Community College (MCCC) from 2001 to 2015, when she led the college through a transformation process to improve student success. Under her leadership, the college earned the prestigious Achieving the Dream Leah Meyer Austin award for its efforts around student success.

Stout holds a doctorate in educational leadership from the University of Delaware, a master's degree in business administration from the University of Baltimore, and a bachelor's degree in English from the University of Delaware. Granted President Emeritus recognition by MCCC, she also holds honorary degrees from MCCC and Miami Dade College.



# The 2018 Dallas Herring Lecture: The Urgent Case: Focusing the Next Generation of Community College Redesign on Teaching and Learning

## An Introduction

I am honored to be here to continue the tradition of the Dallas Herring Lecture and to follow previous speakers whom I greatly admire for their contributions to community college leadership: Josh Wyner, Ken Ender, and Eduardo Padrón.

As president of Achieving the Dream (ATD), I am proud of our strong partnership with North Carolina State University, much of it linked by the visionary efforts of Bob Templin, a leader whom we proudly share as a colleague. Bob is a founding member of the ATD Board of Directors, serving as its chair from 2011 to 2018. His leadership has bridged ATD and this program—helping us to advise on the curriculum, primarily around data and analytics, and in establishing the North Carolina State University DREAM Fellows program, which will continue at DREAM19. We are looking forward to our new work with you and the Aspen Institute, through the generous support of the John M. Belk Endowment, to build supports to ensure the ongoing success of the presidents of North Carolina's community colleges.

## The “Localness” of Community Colleges and Its Implications for Reform

I am also honored to deliver a lecture that reflects the principles espoused by Dallas Herring, who believed that education was a crucial driver for individual success and the health of the community. His legacy is that of a champion of access to education for all, a visionary who saw the need to establish what has become North Carolina's community college system, and a believer in the power of educators and citizens to make a difference in the public welfare. Reading the transcripts of Herring's interviews reveals that he believed that educational improvement was local, born in his words “by the right of the local people to determine policy in education.”

Herring's belief in the power of our collective localness, an asset we still must cultivate and leverage as community college leaders, was prescient. The challenges we face today are the same fundamental ones that have existed since the proliferation of technical and community colleges across the country during his era. As Kevin Dougherty (Community College Research Center) notes in a recent overview of community college reform efforts, the very mission of community colleges is our challenge:

*Community colleges are assigned a key and very difficult role. They are expected to provide higher education opportunity and social mobility for less advantaged students. But this is to occur in a society with great social class and race inequality, where higher education access and completion are subject to powerful sociopolitical forces mobilized to preserve that inequality.*

Herring saw that our localness is what makes our sector unique and essential to accomplishing that larger purpose: improving the economic and social mobility of our students to, in turn, strengthen our communities and beyond. The organization that I lead, ATD, which was founded in 2004 and soon to celebrate our 15th year, focuses on that same guiding principle of the essentialness of local change, supported by a networked approach to institutional transformation, as being fundamental to scale improvements in institutional student completion and therefore gains in national community college student success outcomes.

## 'Reforming our Reforms': The State of Community College Redesign

To speak to the next generation of reform, and my call to center teaching and learning in that redesign, it is important to understand the early work of the community college student success movement through 2015 which addressed the challenge of low and inequitable student outcomes by making structural changes in how institutions operate, admittedly, now, around the margin of our institutions.

> **ATD's five founding principles for reform** emphasized these elements:

1. building a culture of evidence;
2. addressing equity gaps identified in the data;
3. building broad engagement of key stakeholders in the student success work;
4. leadership; and
5. systemic improvement.

The focus on these principles helped colleges set the stage for cultural transformation, primarily through the strategic use of data—and more specifically requiring colleges to disaggregate their data to identify and address equity gaps for low-income students and students of color. Much of ATD's early work focused on the redesign of developmental education.

> **Completion by Design's "loss/momentum framework"** helped institutions organize their work around the student journey into and through colleges around four components: connection, entry, progress and completion. By focusing on the areas where students commonly lose their momentum through the discrete stages of that journey—from interest and application through enrollment and, ultimately, completion—Completion by Design has helped colleges ask the right questions and direct resources to the strategies most likely to keep students on the path to attaining their goals.

> **AACC's *Reclaiming the American Dream: A Report of the 21st Century Commission on the Future of Community Colleges* (2012)** outlined "three R's" for reimagining community colleges: redesigning students' educational experiences, reinvention of institutional roles, and resetting of the system. By building on the learnings from ATD

and CBD's efforts, AACC's report amplified the reform community's calls to redesign our institutions around the student experience and reinforced the imperative to not just focus on access but also student success.

Each of these provided leaders with frameworks for reorganization and reinvention that have led to measurable improvements in practice. We are seeing gains in retention in student cohorts and in gatekeeper courses, and smaller gaps in attainment across student income levels and racial and ethnic groups. But our collective reform efforts have not yielded the desired results. By almost any measure, as community colleges, we are still not meeting our goals, particularly for low-income students and students of color who now make up most of the students at our nation's community colleges. The data is familiar. While we have data that shows that community college graduates thrive in work and life (e.g. ATD's 2017 "Measuring What Matters" report), data from the National Student Clearinghouse show that fewer than four in 10 students who start in our institutions earn a credential within six years. Completion rates for minority students still lag their white counterparts by 10 percent or more, and only 15 percent of our students who transfer to four-year institutions earn a bachelor's degree within six years.

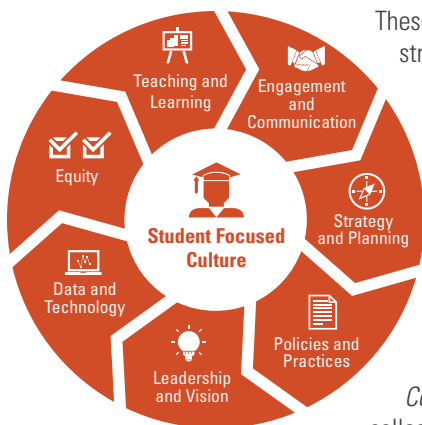
We are now in a stage of "reforming our reforms" with a clear understanding for the imperative for more accelerated and scaled results. The Aspen Institute College Excellence Program (CEP) has emerged as a leading voice with its Aspen Prize and its groundbreaking leadership work. The AACC Guided Pathways framework has emerged on the shoulders of learnings from ATD and CBD and CCRC's groundbreaking analysis of our redesign successes and failures. At ATD, our own research and development efforts have led us to evolve our five founding principles into seven fundamental institutional capacities.

These capacities are ones which we believe colleges must have in place to affect scaled and accelerated student success. They also are helping us recast and customize our signature leadership and data coaching model to support colleges where they are in their respective student success journeys, including their work in adopting a guided pathways approach.



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*At Achieving the Dream, learning from our colleges has led us to evolve our five founding principles into seven fundamental institutional capacities.*



These new approaches focus significantly on structural and process change and mutually reinforce our collective efforts to support colleges in improving student outcomes. Yet, these efforts have lacked an explicit focus on improving teaching and learning as a primary lever for institutional transformation.

“Our reform conversations center on everything but teaching,” wrote Josh Wyner in his 2014 book *What Excellent Community Colleges Do*. Gail Mellow and colleagues in their aptly titled book *Taking College Teaching Seriously, Pedagogy Matters!* point out that “attention to instruction is not routine” and that among the many investments we make as institutions, too little attention is paid to supporting faculty.

If we are to put students at the center, excellent teaching and support for quality instruction must be at the core of our reform work. Since 2015, as a reform movement, we have continued to revise our reform frameworks to guide improvement with this in mind, but focusing on teaching and learning still is not central to the field’s overall theory of change.

For example, CCRC’s book *Redesigning America’s Community Colleges* led to the development of the AACC guided pathways framework, which includes as one of its four priorities ensuring that students are learning. The Aspen Institute’s framework includes learning among its own four key outcomes. And ATD’s new capacity framework explicitly calls out teaching and learning as a key fundamental. Even with this new attention, however, there’s still a limited focus on teaching itself, and, more importantly, what is required for institutions to build a culture of teaching and learning excellence.

## The Need to Focus on Teaching and Learning

Creating greater urgency for teaching and learning in institutional reform is long overdue. Our faculty have always been and will always be the first and most frequent point of ongoing contact with our students. College leaders need to empower faculty to lead changes in pedagogy, rethink and align course and program student learning outcomes, build coherent and clear course and program sequences, and engage in advising in new ways. Teaching must be made more dynamic, relevant, culturally responsive, and engage and cultivate students’ ownership of what they learn. It also must support students in



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developing a growth mindset and connect them to academic and non-academic supports to help them stay on the path to completion and employment. But the onus cannot solely be on faculty to do more. They need support and time for more reflective practice and to participate in ongoing collaborative professional development. They need supports and incentives to enable them to teach and learn in new ways.

Though institutions and reformers have worked on these areas for some time, we often tried to double down on areas that data say could make a difference without tackling more systemic approaches that fully address student motivation and the overall quality of teaching and learning.

Early in the ATD movement, for example, developmental education faculty were deeply involved in the student success work. Our hypothesis then was that if we “fixed” developmental education, more students would enter college pathways and complete. While promising models of faculty leadership and many pedagogical innovations emerged from this work, we learned early that this was not the “secret sauce” for reform.

Today, many college leaders have still not picked up teaching and learning as a key thread for improvement. It is our blind spot.

Many community college presidents are willing to leave matters of pedagogy to academic departments because they are reluctant to be perceived as interfering with faculty autonomy. Others lack experience in teaching, having entered leadership roles by climbing the rungs of administration. In my own case, I never had a course in pedagogy or curriculum design. I taught part time for 15 years in several delivery modes. I was handed a sample syllabus, rough learning outcomes, and a textbook and sent off to teach with little support, even while teaching as a college president.

Improving teaching and learning is a big job to take on. ATD’s work in assessing improvement in nearly 200 institutions reveals that teaching and learning is among the areas where capacity is weakest across our network institutions.

“Creating greater urgency for teaching and learning in institutional reform is long overdue.”



Our Institutional Capacity Assessment Tool (ICAT) has been administered at 180 network colleges since September 2016. It includes the seven fundamentals I mentioned earlier:

1. strategy and planning,
2. policies and practices,
3. leadership and vision,
4. data and technology,
5. equity,
6. engagement and communication, and
7. teaching and learning.

In the framework, we define teaching and learning primarily as the “commitment to engaging full-time and part-time faculty in examinations of pedagogy, meaningful professional development, and a central role for them as change agents with the institution.”

Within the Teaching and Learning capacity area, colleges evaluate themselves around five teaching and learning dimensions:

1. instructional practices and support services,
2. developmental education,
3. structured program maps,
4. professional development, and
5. culture of evidence.

Of the 12 questions that comprise the assessment of Teaching and Learning, colleges rank their capacity around program-level outcomes, learning supports for students, and accelerated options for developmental education highest. Conversely, faculty applying research-based instructional practices, faculty leadership in student success efforts, effective professional development programs for instruction, updating professional practice based on acquired professional development, using data to improve educational practice in the classroom, and professional development supports for adjunct faculty participation are ranked as the lowest capacity areas.

These results indicate that much of our reform work in teaching and learning to date has been outside the classroom. We have much more to do to build a deep focus on pedagogy and to support our colleges in building a culture of teaching and learning excellence.

Based on our learning from the field, I believe three key organizing principles and five building blocks can serve as an important framework to support leaders in our colleges in developing the culture of teaching and learning excellence that is necessary to see the scaled, accelerated, systemic, and sustained results that our students and communities require from us.

## Organizing Principles for Creating a Culture of Teaching and Learning Excellence

ATD's work has led us to three organizing principles that we believe can lead to creating a culture of teaching and learning excellence:



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- 1. Full-time and adjunct faculty are using inclusive evidence-based instructional practices to foster student learning.** Jesse Stommel, co-author of the book *An Urgency of Teachers: The Work of Critical Pedagogy*, puts it well: “Teachers teach; pedagogues teach while also actively investigating teaching and learning.” Too few of our community college faculty are pedagogues because we have not created conditions for reflective practice to thrive. When faculty investigate and bring inclusive pedagogical practices into the classroom, they help bring the student to the center, lift their strengths, and empower them to be more autonomous in their journeys as learners. And as we develop efforts to support and sustain this culture of ongoing inquiry and improvement, we need to make sure that adjunct faculty are not only involved, but also can facilitate and lead these efforts around improved pedagogy.
- 2. Students are engaged as active learners in an accessible, empowering, personalized, and supportive academic climate.** Inclusive pedagogy and an emphasis on growth mindset alone are not sufficient to counter the growing needs many of our students face outside of the classroom, including food and housing insecurity. Faculty can play important roles in identifying and connecting students to resources, but we cannot expect them to know how to take on new advising and coaching roles unless we change how we think about faculty-student interactions and provide the tools and resources they need to do this work.
- 3. Institutions are creating an organizational culture that embraces professional learning for continuous improvement.** This work involves engaging faculty at all levels in improving their practice, supported by structures such as Centers for Teaching and Learning, which have begun to take root on community college campuses. But it also requires stepping back and looking at our overall strategic efforts in all areas

to ensure that they are aligned with and support our efforts to improve teaching and learning to create a culture of instructional excellence.

## The Building Blocks of Instructional Improvement

These three guiding principles—inclusive, evidence-based instructional practices; engaged students; and organizational culture built around continuous improvement—represent the foundation upon which a culture of teaching and learning excellence can be built. But they are just that—a foundation. Once leaders have committed to establishing these principles as the expectations for teaching and learning on their campuses, they must delve more deeply into the specific practices and strategies that can serve as the building blocks to make a culture of excellence a reality.

Let me outline five of them.



**First, leaders must adopt continuous improvement models to drive innovation in curriculum and pedagogy.** Continuous improvement models are commonplace, but I'm referring to what Gail Mellow calls a "pedagogy matters practice improvement model," one which places faculty members, departments and divisions at the center of a process focused on the design and refinement of inclusive pedagogical practices.

Dr. Mellow writes that "faculty want to, can and should have the opportunity to improve their practice." We know from our work that pedagogy is critical to student success and refinement of pedagogy requires that our institutions offer faculty time and continuous opportunities for reflection. We know this time and reflection is not common in most of our colleges. Instead, many of our colleges are like the one described by Sean Michael Morris, cofounder of the Digital Pedagogy Lab, and thrive in a "culture of non-inquiry."

In a culture of teaching and learning excellence, leaders create an atmosphere that promotes inquiry by making it safe for individual faculty members, departments, and divisions to continuously assess their practice by asking questions—questions like:

- What did we try?
- What risks did we take?
- Where did we fail?
- Where were we successful?
- What was the impact on our students?
- What do we keep and what do we change?

Inquiry can be sparked through formal structures. At Valencia College in Florida, for example, tenure projects require faculty to design plans to change instruction based on the use of data, then implement them and measure the change in student learning outcomes. At Dr. Mellow's institution, LaGuardia Community College, faculty are grouped into "reflective learning circles." Supported by coaches, these groups develop lessons,

which are posted online for others to critique. And the Community College of Baltimore County's culturally responsive teaching and training program challenges faculty and staff to examine assumptions, how they interact and collaborate with others, and how they develop the specific knowledge and skills necessary to teach and work effectively people from all backgrounds.

Other approaches may be informal, such as encouraging experienced instructors to reflect and share their learnings with their peers on a regular basis. Formal or informal, these efforts must become intentional institutional practice.

Continuous improvement efforts also must emphasize getting data into the hands of faculty to "open the doors and windows" on their practice. In the hands of individual faculty, data can help identify how students are progressing through not just their own courses, but also through the programs they are part of. In the hands of faculty teams, data can help align courses and programs and give each faculty member a deeper understanding of the student journey into and through their courses.

At Pierce College in Washington, leaders focused on the "democratization of data" as a key part of overall student success efforts. The college put real-time data on department, course and instructor-level student success, broken down by demographic indicators, in the hands of each member of the faculty. Chancellor Michele Johnson said the key to encouraging faculty to work with this new, often uncomfortably granular level of data was for leaders to emphasize that the purpose of the dashboards was to focus on improvement, and to encourage them to examine their course design pedagogy.

When teachers become pedagogues, as Jesse Stommel says, these kinds of reflective questions, as informed by a deeper understanding of data, become a core part of how faculty continue to learn. The answers will help drive improved teaching and improvement at scale.



**The second building block to create a culture of teaching excellence is focused on creating a hub innovation on campus to help make improvements in teaching happen. Leaders must invest in Centers for Teaching and Learning and align the work of the centers with their institution's broader student-centered mission and student success agenda.** For faculty and staff to really focus and reflect on their practice, they need professional support, as well as the time and space to do so. I would suggest that teaching and learning centers are currently an undervalued and under-resourced asset that many community colleges would benefit from reevaluating and reinvesting in.



“I would argue that Centers for Teaching and Learning can—and should—play a role as an anchor for excellence across the institution.”

Achieving the Dream’s annual survey indicates that about two-thirds of ATD member institutions (113 of 169 responding colleges) have centers; but research shows that where they do exist, these centers are not as robust as they need to be. Andrea Beach and her colleagues reveal in their book, *Faculty Development in the Age of Evidence*, that the centers typically are under-resourced and understaffed. Well over half (59 percent) of institutions contacted by the researchers said their budgets were less than \$50,000. They are typically run by a single person on campus responsible for faculty development and focused on a limited set of teaching interventions. They often are led by faculty who are recognized as excellent teachers but are not trained in faculty development. These faculty members are frequently on rotating assignments in and out of the centers, contributing to a lack of consistency in leadership, focus and influence. In short, the structure and support for these centers suggests that they are not central to the student success outcomes work of their institution.

I would argue that Centers for Teaching and Learning can—and should—play a role as an anchor for excellence across the institution.

To be effective, colleges need to ensure that their center is aligned with the institution’s student success mission. They need to be adequately resourced and staffed by people with backgrounds in faculty development who can share information from research and best practices. These faculty developers can play new roles in culture building by improving faculty capacity to collect and use data on student learning and by fostering collaboration among faculty from varied disciplines to surface inclusive pedagogical practices that benefit all students.

As Beach and her colleagues note, centers should not be places where faculty come to be repaired, but—like the garage where the founders of Apple computers developed their first computers—“places where creative faculty members gather to take risks, innovate and transform the educational landscape.”

How can leaders create centers that fulfill these roles?

***First, the center’s role in helping faculty teach better and become reflective practitioners must be recognized and supported.*** Many faculty members come to our campuses developed in their content areas and underdeveloped in the pedagogical skills required to teach them. Leaders can set the expectation that all faculty know how to use evidence-based teaching practices and frameworks for effective practice, which run the

full range of instruction, from designing effective courses and fostering productive learning environments to promoting higher order thinking and assessing to inform instruction and promote learning.

To support these expectations, some institutions are turning to groups like the Association of College and University Educators (ACUE), AVID for Higher Education, and Faculty Guild to help build capacity. For example, Amarillo and Odessa colleges in Texas both worked with AVID to implement a series of high engagement strategies through professional development tailored for specific faculty groups, including newly hired faculty; those teaching math, science, and developmental courses; and career and technical education staff.

Others, like Davidson County Community College, are focusing internally on developing a shared understanding of what teaching excellence means for their institution. At Davidson, faculty, staff and administrators, including the college president, worked together over several months to develop a set of principles to guide that common understanding of teaching and learning. Once the principles were clearly articulated, Davidson used them as a guide to redesign all professional development efforts for faculty.

***Second, leaders can position the center as a unique agent for organizational change.*** Centers can expand their focus from supporting individual faculty to activities that support improvements at scale, such as fostering faculty networks studying common practice to address both individual needs and create substantive curricular change. Year-long faculty learning communities, study groups, departmental action teams, groups focused on accreditation and program review, and faculty involved in campus-based reform work such as ATD all represent avenues to position the center as a first point of support for faculty—and an avenue for broader improvement. Presidents and provosts can reinforce this role of influence by placing center leaders at their leadership tables giving teaching a prominent voice in larger institutional discussions.

As Peter Felten and his colleagues point out in *The Undergraduate Experience*, it means approaching faculty development from a narrative of growth rather than constraint. “An institution operating within a narrative of constraint considers faculty development to be something done to hostile or disengaged faculty; requirements and a check-box mentality often rule the day. A narrative of growth, on the other hand, leads to faculty development initiatives emerging from the professional goals and habits of a busy faculty who willingly seek the expertise and perspectives of peers.”

***Third, leaders must ensure that inclusive pedagogical practices are extended to the center itself, so that diverse needs of all faculty—novice and experienced instructors, women, and faculty of color—are met.*** Centers also should provide faculty with opportunities for leadership, which, along with their roles in faculty senate and unions, allows them to set the direction of an entity with an organizational perspective on the core of what they do—teaching and learning.



**Beyond adopting continuous improvement models and investing in Teacher Learning Centers and connecting the teaching to the student success agenda, leaders must support faculty in developing a new approach to teaching. This is the third building block: Leaders must support faculty to approach their work from the diverse set of lived experiences, skills and knowledge that their students bring to the campus and into the classroom.**

A myriad of recent research has confirmed what those of us in the community college community know firsthand: the challenges many of our students face and bring with them to campus. Research from the Hope Center at Temple University has shown that food and housing insecurity, childcare, transportation and healthcare needs, and simply not having enough money to make it from month to month are widespread in communities of all kinds—urban, rural, suburban.

We also know that for many of our students, the college process is filled with unknowns. While our institutions may seem logically organized to those of us who work within those systems on a regular basis, our students—particularly first-time students with little knowledge of what to expect at college—often encounter what appears to be a maze of disconnected courses, services, and technologies they must navigate to find the supports they need.

We have always known that many of our students need these additional supports. But our work suggests that few institutions have reoriented their missions, policies and practices to address these issues in concrete ways. Nor have they implemented strategies for continually assessing, improving, and developing the capacity to address these challenges in an ongoing and sustainable way.

Given these realities, we need to transform our institutions to better meet the needs of our students, including connecting students to a wide array of services that we once may not have thought of as the work of our institutions. We need to create what some of our colleges have come to describe as a “culture of caring” that address our students’ needs holistically.

While much of our ongoing work has focused on nonacademic supports for students, these persistent needs also have a direct impact on how we think about teaching and learning. We can no longer think about what often gets referred to as nonacademic needs as separate from students’ academic needs.

As I said earlier, college faculty have always been and will always be the first and most frequent point of ongoing contact with students. They are our “scalars.” Yet we have left many of them behind. We need to engage and support faculty in their role as a critical link between students and the services and supports they need to be successful. This



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requires collaboration and coordination with others across the institution in supporting student success. This goes beyond what we think of as the traditional role of teachers operating in isolation in the classroom. Our faculty are the ones who often know students the most and are best positioned to intervene when a student is falling off track, but traditionally we have not provided the structures, processes or professional development for them to fulfill this role.

Instead of providing faculty with a dense handbook of services each academic year, we could be forming care teams so a faculty member knows who to call to make sure a student has a “warm handoff” and gets the supports they need rather than directing students aimlessly from office to office. Instead of asking faculty to raise early alert flags that seemingly go into a void, we could create a transparent and integrated process and communication flow, so the faculty know the impact and actions that resulted from the flag and can follow up with the student if necessary. To be successful, institutions must be strategic about articulating how student supports fit with other institutional priorities, including teaching and learning, and ensure that there is strong

faculty engagement throughout the process. Institutions must also provide the necessary support and professional development—accessible for full-time and adjunct faculty—so faculty can feel confident in their role as a part of the student support system. With the proper support, faculty can play important roles in advising and supporting students, identifying the points at which they are likely to lose momentum, and direct them to the non-academic resources they need to remain in schools.

This integrated approach is a far cry from where our institutions are today. We know that not enough of our faculty members are actively engaged in student success efforts and are not getting regular professional development support to improve their practice. Likewise, we have found that institutions that use early warning systems that identify students struggling academically rarely, if ever, bring faculty into the process, so only a limited number of faculty know what to do when students are flagged.

Delta College in Michigan and Renton Technical College in Washington state have both made great strides in creating online resources providing information about early warning systems and student supports for faculty to access as the need arises. This approach has proven more effective than explaining these sorts of systems during new faculty orientation, when instructors often are overwhelmed with information and may not think to use early alert systems until several weeks into the semester. These resources also are an especially effective way of making this information available to adjunct faculty.



We cannot expect faculty members to know how to identify needs, coach students, and ensure they get the services they need unless we change how we think about faculty-student interactions and provide the tools and resources they need to do this work. The alternative is to continue to watch students stop out and drop out and wonder why students don't persist and complete.



**The fourth building block for creating a culture of teaching excellence is that leaders must develop and invest in an explicit adjunct faculty engagement strategy.**

Research shows that over two-thirds (67 percent) of faculty at community colleges worked as part-time, adjunct faculty and nearly six in 10 community college courses (58 percent) are taught by part-time faculty. Adjuncts often report feeling professionally isolated from the institutions they work for, with limited outreach to orient them to culture and, quite often, limited access to campus resources. Uncertainty about schedules from semester to semester also contribute to their feelings of professional isolation. Yet adjuncts have the potential to connect with our students in unique ways. As one said, "I feel like I'm a lot like my students. I'm trying to kind of like scrape together a better life. I mean, we have very similar, very complicated life structures. I think that's one of the reasons a lot of us really enjoy what we're doing and why we make connections with students—because we understand a lot of the struggles that they're going through in a really tangible way."

**67%**

of community college faculty are part-time, adjunct faculty

While economic realities have shaped our institutions' reliance on adjunct faculty, I would submit we have an obligation to support this significant portion of our teaching and learning workforce and bring them more fully into our institutions' academic and student success mission.

Some of the ways in which our institutions can do this involve structural changes, such as offering earlier course assignments or providing adjuncts with a plan for the full academic year or basic supports, such

as office space and access to copying and other services that full-time faculty often take for granted. The Community College of Baltimore County, for example, created Centers for Adjunct Faculty Engagement on each of its campuses. These Centers provide workspaces for adjunct faculty to prepare for class and grade student work. They also provide adjuncts with access to computers and copiers, as well as comfortable spaces to meet with students and for cohort-based professional development. Other center activities are cultural, such as providing orientations for adjuncts—something only 54 percent of the adjunct faculty we surveyed said they had been exposed to.

But I would submit that the strongest lever for engaging adjunct faculty is to bring them more fully into the culture of teaching and learning I have been describing. To that end, Harper College in Illinois has developed an adjunct faculty engagement model



“While economic realities have shaped our institutions’ reliance on adjunct faculty, I would submit we have an obligation to support this significant portion of our teaching and learning workforce and bring them more fully into our institutions’ academic and student success mission.”

which intentionally addresses the professional isolation adjuncts often face. It brings adjuncts into the college’s clearly defined community of practice model for professional development—both as participants and with training and support for them to serve as facilitators. And the college negotiated a promotion and compensation policy with its adjunct faculty union that recognizes and rewards adjuncts who participate in sustained professional development that connects to classroom practice with additional pay, seniority, and the opportunity to interview for full-time positions.

These kinds of practices and policies don’t only benefit our adjuncts. By bringing them into broader efforts to create a culture of continuous improvement and inquiry around inclusive pedagogy, they place adjuncts in a role that can benefit all teaching and learning on our campuses. At Delta College in Michigan, for example, full-time and adjunct faculty are engaged together in Teaching Circles, which spin off into team-teaching partnerships. In this way, full-time and adjunct faculty are continuously learning from each other and supporting each other’s work in the classroom, including innovating and taking risks.



**Fifth, and finally, to create a culture of teaching excellence leaders can drive the design of a truly student-centered institution through teaching and learning.** This requires community college leaders to ask themselves a question: What would it take to put teaching and learning at the center of our capacity-building efforts?

This is the same question we are considering as we begin to update our own ICAT model. While we don’t have all the answers, I believe this requires us to look far more broadly at all of our institutional efforts, as captured in the ICAT measures shown in the chart on the next page and align them with teaching and learning.

ICAT Measure	What it Measures	Relation to Teaching and Learning
<b>Leadership and Vision</b>	The commitment and collaboration of the institution's leadership with respect to student success and the clarity of the vision for desired change.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; Guide analyses and planning</li> <li>&gt; Establish goals, priorities, and incentives</li> <li>&gt; Empower teams, including instructors, to take leadership</li> <li>&gt; Coordinate initiatives</li> <li>&gt; Insist on data</li> <li>&gt; Use bully pulpit</li> <li>&gt; Recognize and reward collaboration, risk-taking, outstanding teaching</li> </ul>
<b>Data and Technology</b>	The institution's capacity to collect, access, analyze, and use data to inform decisions, and to use powerful technology to support student success.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; Identify and strengthen data about teaching and learning</li> <li>&gt; Explore new technologies for academic support, advising, delivery and motivation</li> <li>&gt; Identify personalization technology that connects student interests, success, advising, career mapping</li> </ul>
<b>Equity</b>	The commitment, capabilities and experiences of an institution to equitably serve low income students, students of color, and other at-risk student populations with respect to access, success and campus climate.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; Demonstrate equitable teaching</li> <li>&gt; Support diversity in faculty</li> <li>&gt; Instructors aware of barriers that low-income and first-generation students face and refer to interventions/supports</li> </ul>
<b>Teaching and Learning</b>	The commitment to engaging full-time and adjunct faculty in examinations of pedagogy, meaningful professional development, and a central role for them as change agents within the institution. Also, the college's commitment to restructuring developmental education to facilitate student learning and success.	N/A

<b>Engagement and Communication</b>	<p>The process of enabling key external stakeholders, such as K-12, universities, employers and community-based organizations, and internal stakeholders across the institution to participate in the student success agenda and improvement of student outcomes.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>› Establish meaningful engagement with faculty and students</li> <li>› Develop tools for faculty to get student feedback</li> <li>› Communicate new policies/improvements</li> <li>› Encourage collaboration among faculty</li> <li>› Connect instructors to student supports</li> </ul>
<b>Strategy and Planning</b>	<p>The alignment of the institution with the umbrella goal of student success and the institution's process for translating the desired future into defined goals and objectives and executing the actions to achieve them.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>› Identify assets</li> <li>› Develop comprehensive plan</li> <li>› Explore strategies for strengthening PD, teacher center</li> <li>› Identify costs of implementation</li> </ul>
<b>Policies and Practices</b>	<p>The institutional policies and practices that impact student success and the processes for examining and aligning policies and practices to remove barriers and foster student completion.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>› Review and update policies for hiring, evaluation and retention, professional development, and tenure</li> <li>› Identify and promote evidence-based teaching practices</li> <li>› Conduct research on effective teaching practice and student success</li> </ul>

This alignment work represents a heavy organizational lift across many areas and raises many questions for the future design of our colleges and the supports required for the evolving and more central role of faculty leadership.

“In an era when we need to encourage active learning as a means for students to own and apply what they learn in different contexts and pathways, we need faculty to understand their students in context—where they are struggling, what they don’t know, what is hindering their progress.”

One of the biggest challenges leaders will face is that often each campus or even academic department has its own approach to how it hires, develops, retains, evaluates, and rewards and promotes faculty members. These systems need to be brought into alignment with each other and the overall student success goals of the organization.

At the same time, leaders will have to support and guide the development of an evolving role for faculty. In an era when we need to encourage active learning as a means for students to own and apply what they learn in different contexts and pathways, we need faculty to understand their students in context—where they are struggling, what they don’t know, what is hindering their progress.

Already faculty members are taking on new—and increasingly differentiated—roles as coaches, advisors, mentors, course developers and facilitators of student success. A growing number of the professoriate are developing courses and degrees aimed at communicating content with students in new ways or are teaching in science labs or writing and math centers. Often, these faculty have mastered a broader set of skills to support students. We need to bring them more intentionally into broader efforts to reshape the culture of learning on our campuses.

At the same time, we need to emphasize and support ways to bring our institutions’ ongoing efforts to collect and make use of student data much closer to the classroom. As I suggested earlier, strengthened Centers for Teaching and Learning and their faculty developers have an important role to play in building faculty capacity and practice in using data to catalyze changes in course design and pedagogy.

Taking on these five building blocks for creating a culture of teaching and learning excellence—adopting continuous improvement models for pedagogy, investing in Centers for Teaching and Learning, helping faculty to approach their work from the lived experiences of their students, developing and investing in an explicit adjunct

faculty engagement strategy, and driving the design of a student-centered institution through teaching and learning—will not be easy. This work cannot be taken on by a community college president or a senior leadership team in isolation. Creating this culture will require that we build new and deeper relationships and expectations for all of our leaders—our CAOs, academic deans, department or division chairs—and for our individual faculty members, full-time and adjunct. In fact, in our work at ATD, we have found the institutional spark for systemic change to be in the “middle”—with the academic deans and department chairs and through the strategic connection of teaching and learning reforms with shared governance processes that value faculty voices and leadership.

## Conclusion

There can be a tendency at inflection points in any major educational reform movement to want to surface the next big idea for transformational change. There is a temptation to move past what we think of as old approaches in favor of bold action, because no signature student success initiatives or policies have yet led to the magnitude of improvement we seek in our outcomes. I suggest that the bold action is right in front of us and is at the core of our being as community colleges.

As Dr. Eduardo Padrón, president of Miami Dade College, puts it, “If we are to meet the challenges of learning in this time of change, teaching must be central to our success.”

We can no longer afford innovation on the margins, or continued working outside and around faculty, and still expect to see greater and more equitable gains in learning and completion. We must recognize that in our focus on completion outside of the classroom, we are in danger of leaving behind the achievement of our fundamental enduring charge, student learning.

New players are jumping into the vacuum we have created. As a recent article in the *Chronicle of Higher Education* states:

*It's game on for the business of improving faculty learning. No really. For-profits see our pain point and are jumping in. One founder of a company focused on improving faculty learning said of colleges, "they're either actively focusing on the classroom, or they know they have to."*

This represents an opportunity for our institutions, but also a danger. Our faculty must be at the center and leading our instructional improvement efforts. We can't outsource our way to a solution on teaching quality. Tactical efforts to improve specific facets of instruction, either with strategic partners or built internally by ourselves, will only work if nested inside a strategically and intentionally built and nourished culture of teaching and learning excellence. As I've outlined during these remarks, creating that culture isn't

the result of one action, but built on three foundational principles with intentional and explicit efforts around the five building blocks required to create a culture of teaching and learning excellence.

In this next generation of reform work, the big idea is not new and cannot be another magic bullet that offers to solve all of our problems. Instead, the big idea is the hard work required to place teaching and learning, and the strategic and intentional building a culture of instructional excellence, in the center of all of our work.

These changes will drive the sustainable and scaled results our students and our communities need and deserve. It is up to all of us to step up and focus forward to build the institutions capable of delivering on this promise.



“We must recognize that in our focus on completion outside of the classroom, we are in danger of leaving behind the achievement of our fundamental enduring charge, student learning.”

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## About Dr. Dallas Herring & The Power of Education

Dr. W. Dallas Herring made it his life's work to build a system that would serve all of North Carolina's residents by preparing them for productive work and active citizenship. As a teenager, he established a 75-book community library in the local general store of Rose Hill, his home town. He later developed a statewide system of technical education institutes that eventually became the North Carolina Community College System. He also served for 20 years as chair of the North Carolina State Board of Education. Throughout his career, he was always guided by his vision of educational "opportunity for all the people."



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## About the Belk Center for Community College Leadership and Research

With a \$10.86 million grant from the John M. Belk Endowment, the NC State College of Education will establish the Belk Center for Community College Leadership and Research to enhance and strengthen its support of community colleges in North Carolina in three ways:

- **Further the preparation of future community college presidents.** The college will integrate executive leaders as professors of the practice into the redesigned Doctor of Education in Community College Leadership. These professors of practice will provide first-hand insights and experiences, field-based leadership opportunities, and examples of how theory and research inform practice.
- **Provide ongoing leadership development to community college executives and trustees.** The Presidents' Academy—a partnership between NC State College of Education, N.C. Association of Community College Presidents, N.C. Community College System, Achieving the Dream and Aspen Institute's College Excellence Program—will provide ongoing support to community college presidents in order to help them strengthen their institution's performance with post-completion outcomes. Working in tandem with the Presidents' Academy, the Trustees Institute will partner with the N.C. Association of Community College Trustees and N.C. Community College System to develop programs targeted at assisting community college trustees in learning about their roles in supporting higher levels of institutional performance.
- **Build capacity for evidence-based decision-making and applied research.** The college will develop an infrastructure to identify the most critical needs facing community colleges, as well as facilitate sustainability and responsiveness to those needs. By conducting and disseminating action research, the college will support community college leaders in making evidenced-based decisions for enhanced institutional performance.

### Belk Center Project Team

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- **Diane Chapman**, Ed.D., Grant Evaluator and Teaching Professor and Director of the Office of Faculty Development



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