INVESTING IN CHANGE

How Much Do Achieving the Dream Colleges Spend — and from What Resources — to Become Data-Driven Institutions?

Elizabeth M. Zachry
Erin Coghlan

June 2010

Achieving
the Dream ™

Community Colleges Count

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Overview

Achieving the Dream: Community Colleges Count provides a comprehensive model for colleges interested in investing in improved student outcomes. Started in 2003 by Lumina Foundation for Education, Achieving the Dream encourages colleges to undertake a rigorous process of self-examination and to develop concrete goals and priorities for institutional reform based on an analysis of their student outcomes data. In an effort to assist colleges in accomplishing these goals, Achieving the Dream provides a number of supports, including coaching, annual initiativewide conferences, and grants totaling $450,000 over five years. However, colleges are also expected to find other sources of funding — either from external grants or their own institutional funds — to pilot and implement successful institutional reform strategies.

This report analyzes the experiences of five community colleges and the investments they made in implementing an institutionwide improvement process aimed at increasing students' success. The colleges in this study are located in the southeastern and southwestern United States and include Valencia Community College in Orlando, Florida; Tallahassee Community College in Tallahassee, Florida; El Paso Community College in El Paso, Texas; South Texas College in McAllen, Texas; and the University of New Mexico in Gallup, New Mexico. The report examines how, where, and with what resources these colleges supported their reforms, as well as the key activities driving their overall expenditures.

Key Findings

- **On average, these colleges spent $6.3 million on their broad institutional reform process.** While their investments were substantial, they represented less than 5 percent of their overall institutional revenues during this five-year period. Colleges tended to support much of their work through the reallocation of existing employee time; however, flexible institutional funds and external grants also played an important role, especially for the small college in the study.

- **Colleges' $450,000 grants from Lumina provided an important impetus for change.** However, these grants tended to be the smallest resource supporting colleges' spending.

- **Colleges' investments over time revealed a ramp-up in spending during the final period of their five-year participation in the initiative.** Colleges tended to spend few funds early in their institutional reform process while investing 50 percent to 60 percent of their resources in the final two years of their implementation of Achieving the Dream.

- **Colleges' spending on reform activities — such as leadership and management, institutional research, and intervention strategies — tended to differ by institution.** Colleges invested heavily in all three areas, spending an average of 47 percent on implementing their intervention strategies, 33 percent on leadership and management activities, and 20 percent on upgrading their institutional research capacity.

- **Colleges' committee work and professional development tended to be key drivers of expenditures in leadership management, while institutional research costs tended to be driven by data analysis and staffing.** Faculty and staff involvement tended to be the key drivers of colleges' intervention strategies. Colleges that involved faculty and staff more heavily also tended to have higher levels of spending.

Contents

List of Tables, Figures, and Boxes

Table

Figure

Figure

Box

Preface

There is growing interest among community college administrators and faculty in improving the quality and timeliness of information on the students they serve. Until recently, most community colleges were able to do little more than provide the most basic data on enrollment and student demographics. Now, community colleges are increasingly focused on tracking the progress of students as they move through their educational programs and on understanding the reasons why some students get ahead while others stall or drop out. Ideally, administrators and faculty can use such information to make changes in instruction and other services that will lead to greater success for individual students and the college as a whole.

Achieving the Dream: Community College Count is a bold, national initiative that aspires to help community colleges become "data-driven" institutions. Launched by Lumina Foundation for Education in 2003, it provides participating colleges with grants totaling $450,000 and technical support to help them gather and analyze student records and other data for the purposes of institutional improvement. MDRC and its partners at the Community College Research Center are examining both the implementation and the effectiveness of the initiative in changing college practices. This report focuses on the *cost* of the initiative to participating institutions. Specifically, what activities do colleges spend money on, and why do they invest in them? How and where do colleges find the resources to cover these expenses?

To answer such questions, the report takes an in-depth look at the financial decisions made by five Achieving the Dream colleges located in Florida, New Mexico, and Texas. The colleges differ in size and research capacity, but they share a deep commitment to analyzing data and developing programs to increase student success. Two of the most striking findings are how much money the colleges invested in their efforts — spending far more than their $450,000 grants — and how resourceful they were in finding ways to cover their expenses. For example, the colleges reallocated administrator and faculty time to perform various research and program development tasks, and they leveraged funds from federal grant programs or other foundations. They also combined Achieving the Dream activities with tasks that they needed to perform to maintain their regional accreditation.

Our hope is that community college leaders who are interested in strengthening their research capacity and piloting programs to increase student success will benefit from the experiences of the colleges profiled in this report. The stakes are high; policymakers and the general public are demanding greater accountability from community colleges, even as institutional budgets are increasingly lean. The administrators and faculty who were interviewed for this report were generous in sharing their views on what they accomplished, what they would do differently next time, and what they feel they gained from their investments.

Gordon L. Berlin
President

Acknowledgments

Executive Summary

Imagine walking into the first day of your presidency at a renowned community college knowing that 60 percent of your freshman students have placed into one remedial course or more and are not yet ready for college-level work.[1] Imagine also that over 50 percent of your student body is expected to drop out before completing a degree or certificate program and that only 35 percent will attain a certificate or degree within six years.[2] Even more daunting, the enrollment at your college has risen 28 percent in the past 14 years and is projected to grow by another 13 percent in the next 8 years — while your budget is expected to markedly decline because of a difficult economy and decreasing state support.[3] Despite these challenges, however, imagine that the leader of your country and several important funders of your work have called for you to double the number of students graduating from your college over the next decade.[4]

Statistics like these reveal the unprecedented challenges facing community college leaders today. While community colleges have traditionally been focused on increasing student enrollments, or students' access to college, there has been an increasing movement over the past several years for community colleges to improve students' success while enrolled.[5] Monitoring student success often requires sophisticated technological systems and staff know-how, both of which tend to be underfunded in community college settings. Thus, while striving to increase students' achievement, many community colleges are also facing significant costs related to improving their institutional technology and research capacities. Sadly, while community colleges are tackling these issues, they are also facing one of the most extreme budget crises in decades, as the U.S. recession tightens state finances and threatens the foundation of community college funding.[6]

Achieving the Dream: Community Colleges Count provides a comprehensive model for colleges that want to invest in improving student outcomes. Started in 2003 by Lumina Foundation for Education, this initiative encourages colleges to undertake a rigorous process of self-examination and to develop concrete goals and priorities for institutional reform based on an analysis of their student outcomes data. On joining the initiative, colleges are expected to follow Achieving the Dream's five-step improvement process in which they (1) commit to an institutional reform agenda aimed at improving student outcomes; (2) analyze data on student

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[1] Jenkins and Bailey (2009).
[2] Brock (2010); Jenkins and Bailey (2009).
[3] Hussar and Bailey (2009); Katsinas and Tollefson (2009).
[4] Office of the Press Secretary (2009); Lumina Foundation for Education (2009); Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation (2009).
[5] Wolff (2005).
[6] Strauss (2009); Blumenstyk, Sander, Schmidt, and Wasley (2008).

outcomes to prioritize their actions; (3) engage a broad range of stakeholders in developing strategies to address their priority problems; (4) implement, evaluate, and improve their student success interventions; and (5) establish a culture of continuous improvement and institutionalize successful practices.

The initiative expects that these institutional improvements will ultimately result in increases in student success along five key indicators: completion of developmental education courses; completion of introductory-level, or "gatekeeper," college courses; completion of courses with a grade of C or higher; persistence from term to term and year to year; and attainment of a degree or certificate. As colleges undertake this work, they are provided with a number of supports from Achieving the Dream, including expert coaching, annual initiative-wide conferences, and grants totaling $450,000 over five years.

This report analyzes the experiences of five community colleges and the investments they made in implementing an institutionwide improvement process aimed at increasing students' success over the course of five years. The five Achieving the Dream colleges in this study are located in the southeastern and southwestern United States and include Valencia Community College in Orlando, Florida; Tallahassee Community College in Tallahassee, Florida; El Paso Community College in El Paso, Texas; South Texas College in McAllen, Texas; and the University of New Mexico in Gallup, New Mexico (UNM-Gallup). The report examines how, where, and with what resources these colleges supported their reforms, as well as the key activities driving their overall expenditures, in order to provide lessons for colleges, policymakers, and funders interested in embarking on a similar path toward community college improvement.

The report seeks to answer the following questions:

- How much did colleges spend on implementing a student success-oriented, institutional improvement process at their schools?

- What types of resources did colleges access in supporting their reforms?

- How did colleges' spending change across their five-year participation in Achieving the Dream?

- In what activities did colleges invest most heavily, and which of these were the key drivers of colleges' investments?

- What are the overall lessons learned for other colleges and funders considering a similar model of institutional improvement?

How Much Did Colleges Spend on Implementing a Student Success-Oriented, Institutional Improvement Process at Their Schools?

- **On average, colleges in this study spent $6.3 million, or 13 times their Lumina grants, over the course of five years in implementing their institutional reforms.**

One main theme might sum up colleges' overall investments in Achieving the Dream: Colleges took seriously the initiative's push for them to invest heavily and widely in institutional change. In this study, colleges' investments ranged from a low of $2.9 million for the smallest college (UNM-Gallup) to a high of nearly $11 million (South Texas) for midsize and large institutions. The investments of the other colleges (Tallahassee, Valencia, and El Paso) ranged from $4.5 million to $7.3 million.

- **While their investments were substantial, colleges' institutional reform expenditures represented less than 5 percent of their overall institutional revenues during this time period.**

Colleges' spending on their Achieving the Dream reforms represents a fraction of their overall finances. The midsize and large colleges in this study (Tallahassee, Valencia, El Paso, and South Texas) invested less than 2 percent of their overall revenues in their institutional reform process. The smallest college in this study (UNM-Gallup), for which reform spending represented a larger percentage of its overall finances, still invested less than 5 percent of its overall budget in these reforms.

What Types of Resources Did Colleges Access in Supporting Their Reforms?

To support their work, the colleges in this study drew on a number of different resources, including the reallocated time of current personnel, flexible institutional funds, external grants from foundations and government agencies, and the $450,000 Lumina grants given to support their Achieving the Dream work. Colleges' use of these resources varied depending on their institutional size.

- **Colleges' own institutional resources, in the form of reallocated employee time and flexible institutional funds, proved to be the key to supporting midsize and large colleges' institutional reform process.**

The midsize and large colleges in this study spent $3.5 million to $9.5 million in institutional resources (including both reallocated employee time and flexible institutional monies) to

support their Achieving the Dream reforms, or 88 percent of their overall reform budgets. Colleges' use of institutional funds and reallocated staff time far outweighed their use of other resources and represents an investment of 8 to 21 times the value of their Lumina grants.

- **The smallest college in this study (UNM-Gallup) invested far fewer institutional funds to support its work, instead depending more heavily on outside resources.**

In implementing its institutional reforms, UNM-Gallup invested approximately $900,000, or 30 percent of its overall reform expenditures, while external grant dollars and Lumina monies made up 55 percent and 15 percent of its support, respectively. This suggests that smaller colleges may have significantly different financial profiles than larger colleges and thus may need to draw on different resources when undertaking a large-scale institutional improvement process.

- **Colleges' $450,000 Lumina grants proved to be the smallest resource supporting their institutional reforms.**

Regardless of institutional size, the Lumina grants accounted for a fraction — averaging only 8 percent — of the colleges' overall support for institutional reform work. This finding reveals that colleges took seriously the initiative's call to identify supplemental funding to support their implementation of Achieving the Dream, with many of the colleges using their Lumina grants to leverage other funds.

How Did Colleges' Spending Change Across Their Five-Year Participation in Achieving the Dream?

- **Colleges' investments over time tended to mirror Achieving the Dream's expectations for the implementation of their reforms, with a ramp-up in spending during the final period of their five-year participation in the initiative.**

Colleges tended to spend relatively few dollars in the early years of their work, with four of the five colleges in this study spending less than 20 percent of their overall budgets during their first two years in the initiative. Colleges tended to make the heaviest investments in their institutional reforms during the final two years of implementation (spending approximately 50 to 60 percent of their reform dollars).

In What Activities Did Colleges Invest Most Heavily, and Which of These Were the Key Drivers of Colleges' Investments?

This report examines colleges' expenditures across three broad activities, including (1) the leadership and management of their institutional reforms, (2) changes in their institutional research capacity, and (3) the development of their intervention strategies.

- **Colleges' spending on reform activities tended to differ by institution. However, with one exception, colleges' heaviest investments were on their intervention strategies and in the leadership and management of their reforms.**

Although colleges' expenditures differed depending on their institutional priorities, they tended to spend most heavily on their intervention strategies and their management of the reform process. On average, colleges spent about $3 million (47 percent of their budgets) on their intervention strategies, $2 million (33 percent) on their leadership and management activities, and $1 million (20 percent) on institutional research.

- **Committees and professional development were the key drivers of colleges' expenditures in leadership and management; however, the level of investment depended on how broadly colleges engaged their faculty and staff.**

While leadership and management activities included employees' participation in committees, professional development, the involvement of external stakeholders, and non-institutional research staff's involvement in analyzing data on student outcomes, investments in professional development and committees were the key drivers of these costs. Colleges that followed Achieving the Dream's model of broad stakeholder engagement tended to have higher levels of spending on leadership and management.

- **Colleges' heavy investments in institutional research were driven by technology purchases, the hiring of new staff, and ongoing evaluations.**

While many of the colleges already had strong institutional research departments, most devoted substantial funds to hiring new staff, undertaking ongoing evaluations, and/or upgrading their technology to better track their students' progress. This heavy level of investment reveals that even colleges that start with strong research skills may further improve their ability to monitor students' achievement and track their institution's progress in making these reforms.

- **Colleges made substantial investments in developing, implementing, and scaling up their interventions. These costs were driven primarily by**

faculty and staff development and the implementation of these reform strategies.

Colleges developed a number of strategies aimed at improving students' achievement; interventions ranged from modest changes in course curricula to such ambitious endeavors as implementing new courses or advising programs. Colleges spent disproportionately more on their interventions (91 percent) during the final three years of the initiative, suggesting that the bulk of colleges' monies were devoted to scaling up these interventions. Colleges depended heavily on both internal and external funds to support this work, revealing that colleges may need external support to scale up their strategies.

What Are the Overall Lessons Learned for Other Colleges and Funders Considering a Similar Model of Institutional Improvement?

Lessons for Colleges

- **Carefully consider the deployment of current faculty and staff, and support their leadership of the college's institutional reforms over time.**

While colleges' investments in their institutional reforms were hefty, colleges were able to fund an average of 56 percent of their Achieving the Dream work by reallocating employee time. Additionally, faculty and staff involvement in committee work, professional development, and strategy implementation tended to be key drivers of costs for each of the colleges in this study, with colleges spending an average of $4 million on these activities. Given these expenses, colleges interested in undertaking an Achieving the Dream-like reform process will be well served to consider carefully the expertise and availability of their current faculty and staff when planning their improvement agenda. Furthermore, because these expenditures are sustained over time, colleges need to develop a long-term plan for funding faculty and staff involvement.

- **Prioritize areas for new investments, and identify funding sources to cover these expenses.**

Many of the investments that these colleges made, such as purchasing new technology or developing interventions, required an outlay of hard cash. Both flexible institutional funds and external funds were an important resource for colleges, with these monies making up 17 percent and 18 percent of their resources, respectively. Outside funds may be particularly important for smaller colleges, as external resources made up 55 percent of the funds for the small colleges in this study. Therefore, small institutions, in particular, may benefit from

exploring how external grants and funds can help support their overall institutional reform agenda.

- **Investments in additional institutional research staff and data systems are likely to be key areas for hard-cost investments.[7]**

The majority of the colleges in this study made significant investments in hiring new institutional research staff and purchasing new information technology systems, revealing these to be two key areas for hard-cost expenditures. With institutional research costs increasing incrementally over five years, colleges should plan wisely for these investments. Careful forethought could save unnecessary expenditures and allow colleges to better navigate the complexities and costs associated with new data systems.

- **Develop efficient mechanisms for supporting high-cost activities, such as professional development and technology purchases, to avoid over-spending budgets.**

Just a few, key activities tended to be the main drivers of costs for these colleges. When planning their institutional reform agenda, colleges should seek to identify big-ticket expenses and then consider multiple ways that these costs can be managed more efficiently or more effectively to serve the college's needs. Such careful planning could allow colleges to better sustain their most necessary improvements.

Lessons for Funders

- **Smaller grants supporting an institutional reform process can provide important leverage for colleges' undertaking of such work. However, linking with other foundations or government agencies may also help provide more broad-based support for institutional reform.**

Grants like Lumina Foundation's $450,000 award to Achieving the Dream colleges can provide an important resource to help colleges plan their work and leverage other funds. While small investments are important, colleges need broader-based support when developing and scaling up some of their reforms. Given that one foundation or funder may be unable to provide such wide-scale support, funders might consider linking their resources with other organizations to provide coordinated support for colleges' endeavors. For example, regional or community foundations might link with corporate foundations to support different aspects of a reform agenda. Additionally, if federal interest in community colleges continues and funding measures

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[7]The term "hard costs" is used to represent the external funds that colleges drew on (such as federal and state grants) as well as the reallocation of flexible institutional general funds (excluding employee time).

are implemented, opportunities may exist for foundations to partner with government funders. Such coordinated efforts could allow funders to support specific college reforms while also helping forward these schools' overall efforts to improve student success.

- **Consider how institutional size and location affect colleges' work, and make modifications as appropriate.**

While larger colleges in this study were able to depend on their discretionary funds, smaller colleges, such as UNM-Gallup, had few of these supports, in part due to their small size and rural location. Thus, outside funds may be particularly important for supporting smaller schools. Funders should consider carefully how their monies affect large versus small institutions and should plan their investments accordingly.

- **Contemplate the timing of targeted funding: Smaller amounts of money early on can prove effective for planning and piloting programs, while later funding is useful for program scale-up and the institutionalization of reforms.**

Early in Achieving the Dream, the colleges in this study tended to spend moderately and then use significantly more funds in later years. Foundations and other funders might want to consider for what purposes their investments will be used and might time their investments accordingly. A smaller grant for planning and pilots followed by a larger grant for scale-up and institutionalization may provide the best means for helping colleges sustain their reforms.

Final Considerations for Funding Institutional Reform

Substantial investments in institutional research, planning committees, and professional development activities reveal that the colleges in this study took seriously much of Achieving the Dream's recommended framework for change. However, the key principles of Achieving the Dream are also consistent drivers of colleges' overall reform expenses. Thus, while Achieving the Dream's model for institutional improvement resonates with community colleges, it also requires them to have substantial resources on hand to undertake these reforms.

Given that these colleges made substantial investments in their institutional reforms, Achieving the Dream might help these schools consider concrete ways to manage and allocate their resources toward funding a large-scale reform process. For instance, the initiative could hire a financial planner or other financial adviser to provide advice and support as colleges enter the initiative and begin planning their work. Such a consultant might help colleges take a longer-term view of their expenses and resources and help them plan more carefully for a staged rollout of their reforms. Concrete advice would go far in helping community college presidents sift through the myriad financial obligations and priorities on their plate. The recommendations

in this report provide the first steps toward this goal; however, the key next step is helping colleges harness their financial resources to create sustainable change that will last over time.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

    Imagine walking into the first day of your presidency at a renowned community college knowing that 60 percent of your freshman students have placed into one remedial course or more and are not yet ready for college-level work.[1] Imagine also that over 50 percent of your student body is expected to drop out before completing a degree or certificate program and that only 35 percent will attain a certificate or degree within six years.[2] Even more daunting, the enrollment at your college has risen 28 percent in the past 14 years and is projected to grow by another 13 percent in the next 8 years — while your budget is expected to markedly decline because of a difficult economy and decreasing state support.[3] Despite these challenges, however, imagine that the leader of your country and several important funders of your work have called for you to double the number of students graduating from your college over the next decade.[4]

    Statistics like these reveal the unprecedented challenges facing community college leaders today. While community colleges have traditionally been focused on increasing student enrollments, or students' *access* to college, there has been an increasing movement over the past several years for community colleges to improve students' *success* while enrolled.[5] This shift has required that colleges think critically about how they will reform their everyday practices to focus more concretely on students' achievement. These changes also necessitate that colleges carefully consider how their already-tight resources can be reallocated to better support programming and policies aimed at increasing students' success.

    Meeting such demands has also pushed community colleges to depend on another, traditionally underfunded resource: institutional research. In order to improve their efforts to increase students' success, community colleges must document their reform efforts and monitor the effect of these changes on their students' achievement. Such monitoring requires that colleges be able to track their students' performance longitudinally and monitor any changes in outcomes, such as course pass rates, student persistence, and graduation. Such tracking often requires sophisticated technological systems and staff know-how, both of which tend to be underfunded in community college settings. Thus, as they improve students' achievement,

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    [1]Jenkins and Bailey (2009).
    [2]Brock (2010); Jenkins and Bailey (2009).
    [3]Hussar and Bailey (2009); Katsinas and Tollefson (2009).
    [4]Office of the Press Secretary (2009); Lumina Foundation for Education (2009); Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation (2009).
    [5]Wolff (2005).

many community colleges are also facing significant costs related to upgrading their institutional technology and research capacities.

Sadly, while community colleges are tackling these issues, they are also facing one of the most extreme budget crises in decades, as the U.S. recession tightens state budgets and threatens the foundation of community college funding.[6] While national attention has focused on the severe cuts in California's community college system, many other states — including Colorado, Iowa, Nevada, Oregon, and Wyoming — are making double-digit reductions in their higher education and community college funding.[7] Overall, state governments throughout the country lowered their funding in 2009-10 by $4 billion, or an estimated 5 percent of their overall appropriations for higher education.[8] Such harsh economic times demand that colleges become even more attentive to how, where, and with what resources they invest in improving their students' success.

This report seeks to support community colleges and policymakers in thinking through these challenges by examining how, where, and with what resources five colleges invested in improving their students' achievement over the course of their five-year participation in a national initiative, funded by Lumina Foundation for Education, aimed at increasing community college students' success: Achieving the Dream: Community Colleges Count. The five colleges in this study are located in the southeastern and southwestern United States and include Valencia Community College in Orlando, Florida; Tallahassee Community College in Tallahassee, Florida; El Paso Community College in El Paso, Texas; South Texas College in McAllen, Texas; and the University of New Mexico in Gallup, New Mexico (UNM-Gallup). The analysis explores these colleges' spending across three areas of reform (leadership and management, institutional research, and intervention strategies) in order to understand the key cost drivers in colleges' push to increase their students' success. The report also seeks to capture how colleges' investments may shift over time and the internal and external resources on which colleges depended when implementing these changes. The goal of this analysis is to help provide guidance to colleges, funders, and policymakers who are considering investing similar types of reforms in their own institutions and states.

Understanding Colleges' Revenues: College Financing and the Community College Accountability Movement

Community colleges traditionally have faced many challenges in graduating students: Only 1 in 10 students who started community college in 2002 had earned an associate's degree

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[6]Strauss (2009); Blumenstyk, Sander, Schmidt, and Wasley (2008).
[7]Davis (2009); Dooley (2009); Associated Press (2009); Clark (2009).
[8]Clark (2009).

three years later.[9] These sobering outcomes may be, in part, a result of the traditional funding strategy for community colleges, as states have generally financed community colleges based on the number of students that they enroll rather than on the number of students that they graduate.[10] Such funding patterns encourage community colleges to enroll as many students as possible while providing little financial incentive to focus on increasing students' achievement and graduation rates.

While colleges' revenues tend to be based on their enrollments, their relatively poor graduation rates, along with the nation's ever-increasing need for a well-educated labor force, have spurred many policymakers to begin tying community college funding to demonstrated improvements in performance.[11] For instance, college accreditation agencies, which are responsible for assuring colleges' quality, have pushed community colleges to become more accountable for their efforts to increase student success and, in some cases, have made these institutions' accreditation contingent on these improvements.[12] Maintaining accreditation is an important financial consideration, as colleges that fail their accrediting process may be ineligible to receive federal financial aid under Title IV of the Higher Education Act of 1965 — an important source of revenue for most institutions.[13] Additionally, foundations, such as Lumina Foundation for Education and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, have also renewed their focus on improving student outcomes. Both of these funders have issued calls to double the number of postsecondary credentials issued in the United States over the next two decades and have pledged to center their funding on colleges that can show measurable gains in student outcomes.[14]

Tying funding to improved student success has also been increasing among government agencies. The past decade has seen 47 states instituting new performance accountability systems for community colleges, with some states tying a portion of colleges' funding to documented gains in students' learning or course completion.[15] Additionally, the federal government has also played an important role in pushing community colleges toward greater accountability. Beginning with "A Report of the Commission Appointed by Secretary of Education Margaret Spellings" in 2006, the federal government has called for a more "robust culture of accountability and transparency," whereby colleges work on reforming their institutions to create improved

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[9]Goldrick-Rab, Harris, Mazzeo, and Kienzl (2009).
[10]Educational Commission of the States (2000).
[11]Brock (2010).
[12]Biswas (2006); Dougherty and Hong (2005).
[13]Biswas (2006).
[14]Lumina's "big goal" is to increase the number of adults holding postsecondary credentials from 39 percent to 60 percent by 2025 (Lumina Foundation for Education, 2009). Gates's goal is to double the number of low-income young adults attaining a postsecondary credential by 2025 (Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, 2009).
[15]Dougherty and Hong (2005); Jenkins, Ellwein, and Boswell (2009).

student learning.[16] More recently, President Obama's focus on community colleges has heightened this call for change, as he has encouraged colleges to increase their graduation rates and has provided funding for workforce development.[17] Thus, a variety of stakeholders, many of whom represent important funding streams for community colleges, are increasingly tying their own investments in these schools to demonstrated increases in student achievement.

Despite funders' pledges to contribute considerable resources toward improving student achievement, community colleges still face a tight economic future. The 2008-2009 academic year saw a 13 percent increase in student enrollments and is expected to continue growing by another 13 percent over the next year.[18] However, as these shifts have occurred, the economic support for community colleges has eroded. Results from the survey of the National Council of State Directors of Community Colleges[19] reveal that few community colleges received full funding during the 2007-2008 academic year and that 34 out of 48 states experienced midyear cuts in 2008-2009. Additionally, while community colleges experienced record enrollments in the 2009-2010 academic year, many state directors forecast a 1 percent decline in state support for the 2009-2010 academic year.

Statistics such as these reveal the substantial financial burden that community colleges face as they seek to meet the demands of a rising national accountability movement. As such, knowing what resources to invest and when to invest them are important considerations for colleges as they seek to improve students' achievement.

Achieving the Dream: A Model for Investing in Increased Student Success

Achieving the Dream: Community Colleges Count provides a comprehensive model for colleges that are considering investing in improved student outcomes. Started in 2003 by Lumina Foundation for Education, this initiative was designed to mentor colleges through an institutionwide improvement process aimed at increasing students' achievement. Colleges are expected to undertake a rigorous process of self-examination and to develop concrete goals based on an analysis of data on their student outcomes. Achieving the Dream has been particularly focused on improving the outcomes of students who have traditionally had the greatest barriers to success, including low-income and minority students.[20] As such, colleges are ex-

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[16]U.S. Department of Education (2006).
[17]Office of the Press Secretary (2009).
[18]Lederman (2009).
[19]Katsinas, Tollefson, and Reamy (2008).
[20]Brock et al. (2007).

pected to pay particular attention to these student groups and to focus their efforts on decreasing gaps in their performance.

While beginning in 27 colleges in 5 states, the initiative now encompasses over 100 colleges across 22 states and continues to expand nationally at a rapid pace. On joining the initiative, colleges are asked to focus their efforts on whole-school change that involves multiple stakeholders at the college and in the community that the college serves. As depicted in Figure 1.1, Achieving the Dream has set forth a five-step model of institutional change for colleges to follow in this work:

- **Step 1: Commit.** The college's senior leadership, with support from the board of trustees and faculty leaders, commits to making the changes in policy and resource allocation necessary to improve student outcomes, and it organizes a team to oversee the process.

- **Step 2: Use data to prioritize actions.** The college uses longitudinal student cohort data and other evidence to identify gaps in student achievement. A key premise of this approach is that once faculty and staff see that certain groups of students are not doing as well as others, they will be motivated to address barriers to student success. To ensure that they focus their resources to greatest effect, colleges are encouraged to prioritize the student achievement problems that they plan to address.

- **Step 3: Engage stakeholders.** The college engages faculty, staff, and other internal and external stakeholders in developing strategies for remedying priority problems in student achievement, based on a diagnosis of the causes and an evaluation of the effectiveness of previous attempts by the institution and others to address such problems.

- **Step 4: Implement, evaluate, improve.** The college then implements the strategies for addressing priority problems, being sure to evaluate the outcomes and to use the results to make further improvements.

- **Step 5: Establish a culture of continuous improvement.** The college takes steps to institutionalize effective policies and practices. Particular attention is placed on how resources can be used to bring to scale and sustain proven strategies and on how program review, planning, and budgeting are driven by

Achieving the Dream: Community Colleges Count

Figure 1.1

**Achieving the Dream Five-Step Process for Increasing Student Success
Through Institutional Improvement**

Support from Achieving the Dream

Investments by the college

STEP 1
Commit.

STEP 2
Use data to prioritize actions.

STEP 3
Engage stakeholders.

STEP 4
Implement, evaluate, improve.

STEP 5
Establish a culture of continuous improvment.

Improved student outcomes and reduced achievement gaps among subgroups of students based on five indicators:

- Completion of developmental courses and progression to credit-bearing courses

- Completion of gatekeeper courses, particularly first college-level or degree-credit courses in math and English

- Completion of attempted courses with a C or better

- Persistence from term to term and year to year

- Attainment of credentials

SOURCE: Achieving the Dream: Community Colleges Count (2000), p.11. Reprinted by permission of the publisher.

evidence of what works best for students.[21] Colleges are also encouraged to place a heavy focus on providing professional development for faculty and staff, to advance their efforts to improve student achievement.

Achieving the Dream expects that this work will result in increased student achievement across five key indicators of student success: (1) successful completion of remedial or developmental courses, (2) completion of college-level "gatekeeper" courses, (3) course completion with a grade of C or higher, (4) persistence from semester to semester, and (5) earning of certificates and/or degrees. In order to help colleges accomplish these goals, the initiative has also provided a number of supports, including expert help from a coach and data facilitator, an annual Strategy Institute, a national database, and a $450,000 grant.[22] With these supports, the initiative hopes that all participating colleges will make considerable progress on these measures as they move forward in their institutional improvement process.

Achieving the Dream is unique in being one of the first community college initiatives to provide a whole-school, institutional improvement process aimed at increasing student success.[23] As such, Achieving the Dream's framework — including a focus on improving colleges' leadership commitment to student success, data analysis, engagement, strategy development, and institutional management — is a useful backdrop for considering the different activities in which colleges may invest as they move toward more success-oriented, evidence-based systems.

Selection and Characteristics of Case Study Colleges

The five colleges in this study joined Achieving the Dream in 2004 and are part of the first round of colleges to join the initiative.[24] As such, they have had five years to implement their institutional reform agenda and to invest in the necessary changes needed to help improve their students' achievement. The five colleges are located in the southeastern and southwestern United States and include Valencia Community College and Tallahassee Community College in

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[21]Achieving the Dream (2009). In addition to developing a mechanism to guide colleges' work in *Field Guide for Improving Student Success,* Achieving the Dream has also developed a set of four core principles and beliefs that it hopes colleges will strive to meet and that roughly overlap with its five-step institutional improvement process. (See Appendix A for details.)

[22]Not all the colleges joining Achieving the Dream receive $450,000, as some that join are now self-funded. However, all the colleges in this study received this grant when joining the initiative.

[23]Brock et al. (2007).

[24]Colleges have entered the Achieving the Dream initiative during multiple years and are identified by the "round" in which they joined. Initially, 27 colleges joined Achieving the Dream in 2004; however, one of these colleges left the initiative, so there are currently 26 remaining Round 1 colleges. There are four rounds of colleges that joined Achieving the Dream during its demonstration phase: Round 1 schools entered Achieving the Dream in 2004; Round 2 colleges entered in 2005; Round 3 colleges joined in 2006; and Round 4 schools entered the initiative in 2007. The initiative has now begun to expand nationally, with an additional cohort of colleges joining in 2009.

Florida, El Paso Community College and South Texas College in Texas, and the University of New Mexico-Gallup.

Table 1.1 shows that the colleges represent a variety of contexts in terms of size, location, and characteristics of students. Each of the colleges has a majority of female students and large proportions of students of color — Hispanics in the Texas colleges, Native Americans in the New Mexico college, and African-Americans and Hispanics in the Florida colleges. The colleges are located in diverse settings: Valencia and Tallahassee are in largely urban areas; El Paso is in a midsize town; and South Texas and UNM-Gallup are in remote, rural areas. In 2004, most of the colleges were large, with Valencia and El Paso having more than 20,000 students and Tallahassee and South Texas having enrollments ranging from 13,000 to nearly 20,000 students, respectively. There is also one small college in this study, UNM-Gallup, which had fewer than 3,000 students. Given the substantial variety in the colleges' locations, this report employs several adjustments to allow for a more equitable comparison across their expenditures. (The methodology of the study is described in the next section.)

Table 1.2 shows that these colleges also represent diverse financial profiles. As might be expected, the largest colleges tended to be those with the highest revenues, with Valencia having the largest resources: nearly $170 million in 2006-07. El Paso, the second-largest college in the study, had the next-highest revenues ($144 million), followed by South Texas ($128 million) and Tallahassee ($111 million). UNM-Gallup, as the smallest college, with up to 12 times fewer students than the other colleges in this study, also had the smallest resources: $18.7 million, or less than one-sixth of the other colleges' overall funding. As subsequent chapters show, UNM-Gallup's substantially lower funding has important consequences for how it supports and finances the implementation of reforms.

The Methodology of the Study

The analyses in this study are based on interviews and key financial data collected from the five participating colleges. To collect this information, a two- or three-person research team undertook two 2-day site visits to each of the colleges in the summers of 2007 and 2008. The first set of site visits focused on identifying broad themes in the colleges' Achieving the Dream expenditures, including the colleges' leadership activities, data analysis, committee work, and program pilots. The second visits centered on collecting detailed information about colleges' expenditures in these areas over their five-year participation in the initiative. The site teams also conducted several follow-up interviews with key college leaders in order to estimate costs that occurred during the 2008-2009 academic year.

Achieving the Dream: Community Colleges Count

Table 1.1

Selected Characteristics of Colleges: Academic Year 2006-2007

Characteristic	Tallahasee Community College	Valencia Community College	South Texas College	El Paso Community College	University of New Mexico-Gallup
Size					
Institution size category[a]	10,000 - 19,999	20,000+	10,000 - 19,999	20,000+	1,000 - 4,999
FTE enrollment	10,310	21,342	11,793	16,580	1,728
Total students enrolled	13,776	32,870	19,827	25,023	2,636
Student characteristics[b] (%)					
Female	55.3	57.1	58.3	60.5	66.7
Male	44.7	42.9	41.7	39.5	33.3
White, non-Hispanic	55.2	43.4	3.2	8.1	8.2
Black, non-Hispanic	31.6	14.9	0.3	2.2	0.5
Hispanic	6.7	24.4	93.6	85.5	9.9
Asian or Pacific Islander	1.5	5.0	1.2	0.9	0.9
American Indian or Alaska Native	0.4	0.4	0.1	0.3	78.4
Race/ethnicity unknown	3.7	9.2	1.0	0.0	1.4
Non-resident alien	0.9	2.6	0.7	3.1	0.7
Students attending full time	49.5	43.4	35.4	38.2	42.4
Students attending part time	50.5	56.6	64.6	61.8	57.6
Students receiving any financial aid[c]	72.0	85.0	70.0	64.0	90.0
Finances ($)					
Published in-district tuition and fees	1,645	2,100	1,586	1,452	1,344
Staffing structure					
Total FTE staff	1,156	1,655	1,123	1,740	226

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Integrated Postecondary Education Data System (IPEDS).

NOTES: Data for 2006-2007 are the latest available from IPEDS.

FTE = Full-time equivalent.

[a]Institution size categories are based on total students enrolled for credit, fall 2007. The following classifications are provided by IPEDS: Under 1,000; 1,000 - 4,999; 5,000 - 9,999; 10,000 - 19,999; and 20,000 and above.

[b]Calculations are based on total students enrolled.

[c]Percentage of full-time, first-time degree/certificate-seeking undergraduate students who received any financial aid. Financial aid includes grants, loans, assistantships, scholarships, fellowships, tuition waivers, tuition discounts, veterans' benefits, employer aid (tuition reimbursement), and other monies (other than from relatives/friends) provided to students to meet expenses. This includes Title IV subsidized and unsubsidized loans made directly to students.

Achieving the Dream: Community Colleges Count

Table 1.2

Change in College Revenues: Fiscal Years 2004-05 to 2006-07

College	2004-05 Revenues	2006-07 Revenues[a]
Tallahassee Community College	84,718,378	111,335,366
Valencia Community College	140,814,106	169,807,333
South Texas College	117,111,369	128,069,744
El Paso Community College	139,212,509	144,431,225
University of New Mexico-Gallup	14,750,016	18,698,016

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Integrated Postecondary Education Data System (IPEDS).

NOTES: Revenues for 2004-05 represent Fiscal Year 2005.
　　Revenues for 2006-07 represent Fiscal Year 2007.
　　Revenues are reported using Governmental Accounting Standards Board (GASB) principles and are derived by adding revenues from the following sources: tuition and fees revenues, state government appropriation revenues, local government appropriation revenues, federal operating grants and contracts, state operating grants and contracts, local operating grants and contracts, other operating sources, federal appropriations, federal nonoperating grants, state nonoperating grants, local nonoperating grants, gifts (including contributions from affiliated organizations), investment income, other nonoperating revenues, and total other revenues and additions.
　　[a]Data for 2006-2007 are the latest available from IPEDS.

Categorization of Expenses

In collecting financial data from these institutions, MDRC researchers sought to record the type of activity that the colleges undertook, the timing of the activity, and the type of resource that supported this work. While Achieving the Dream has set forth a model for institutional change (Figure 1.1), colleges rarely captured their expenses using this five-step framework and instead tended to focus on the particular activities of college faculty and staff. As such, this report analyzes colleges' expenditures across three broad activities related to institutional change:

- **Leadership and management.** This category of expenditures examines administrators, faculty, and staff members' involvement in the leadership and management of the colleges' institutional change process. Activities include involvement in planning and leadership committees, the engagement of external stakeholders in the student success agenda, analyzing student outcomes data, and professional development. Typical investments include costs

related to travel, committees and oversight, meetings, participation in external stakeholder events, speaking engagements, workshops, and conferences. As shown in Table 1.3, this category of expenditures correlates broadly with Step 1 (Commit), Step 3 (Engage stakeholders), and Step 5 (Establish a culture of continuous improvement) of the Achieving the Dream model for institutional improvement.

- **Institutional research (IR) and data analysis.** This set of expenditures includes any investments made in IR staffing and technology as well as costs associated with evaluating colleges' institutional performance and strategy interventions. Typical investments include the purchase of data technology; hiring of IR staff; and the collection, analysis, and evaluation of qualitative and quantitative data research by IR staff. This category of costs relates to Step 2 of the Achieving the Dream institutional improvement process.

- **Intervention strategies.** This category analyzes the costs associated with developing and implementing intervention strategies to increase student success. Intervention strategies are the specific reform efforts that colleges take in order to address particular gaps in student achievement. Typical investments include the management, implementation, and operating costs associated with the pilot-testing and scale-up of strategies.[25] Some interventions at these colleges included reforming developmental, gateway, or student success courses, while other interventions focused on reforming student services, such as orientation, counseling and advising, and testing. Intervention strategies correspond to Step 4 of the Achieving the Dream institutional improvement process.

This report analyzes how the colleges invested their resources across these three broad reform areas. An overall summary of colleges' expenditures is provided as well as more specialized analyses of colleges' spending by year, by staff, and by particular activities. Given the dearth of literature on the cost of institutional reform outside the context of Achieving the Dream, this report focuses its discussion on comparing the cost of institutional reform among Achieving the Dream colleges but cannot offer comparisons with other institutions across the country.

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[25]This category of costs does not include the evaluation of strategies. As noted above, those costs are analyzed under IR activities.

Achieving the Dream: Community Colleges Count

Table 1.3

**Overlap of Expenditure Categories with the
Achieving the Dream Five-Step Process of Institutional Improvement**

Leadership and Management	Institutional Research	Intervention Strategies
Step 1: Commit to improving student outcomes	Step 2: Use data to prioritize actions	Step 4: Implement, evaluate, and improve intervention strategies aimed at increasing student success
Step 3: Engage stakeholders in developing strategies for addressing priority problems		
Step 5: Establish a culture of continuous improvement, and institutionalize successful practices		

SOURCE: Achieving the Dream: Community Colleges Count (2009).

Categorization of Resources

In addition to examining colleges' investments in the overall reform process, this report focuses on identifying the key resources that the colleges used to support their work. The colleges in this report tended to draw on four main resources when implementing their Achieving the Dream goals and plans:

- **Lumina grants.** Each of the colleges received an estimated $450,000 to support the development and implementation of their Achieving the Dream goals and plans.[26] In order to account for these costs, MDRC researchers collected detailed Lumina grant ledgers for each of the years (2004-2009) of colleges' participation in Achieving the Dream.[27]

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[26] In some cases, colleges did not expend the entire $450,000 grant and had asked for a no-cost extension of the grant. Therefore, some colleges' expenditures will show amounts less than $450,000.

[27] Colleges' Lumina grant ledgers were collected in fall 2008 and, therefore, contained encumbrances for colleges' expected expenditures in the 2008-2009 school year. The analysis presented in this report thus

(continued)

- **Reallocation of employee time.** Each of the colleges reallocated time for faculty, staff, and administrators to plan and implement their Achieving the Dream activities. MDRC researchers captured these costs by gathering estimates from college leaders about those involved in these activities and their level of effort over the course of the colleges' five-year participation in Achieving the Dream. Staff salaries were also collected in order to estimate these costs in real dollars.

- **Institutional funds.** Many colleges also supported their Achieving the Dream work with more flexible, institutional funds. MDRC researchers collected detailed budgets about these expenditures and how they related to the implementation of the initiative at the schools.

- **Outside grants.** Colleges often receive outside grants — such as federal funds related to Title III and Title V of the Higher Education Act — in order to support their efforts to improve the achievement of particular student subgroups. Given that such plans were often directly related to the colleges' Achieving the Dream activities, MDRC researchers collected detailed information about these grants and analyzed how the funds were used to support colleges' implementation of reforms.

While full costs were generally captured for each of these expenditures, limitations in colleges' budgets and ledgers meant, at times, that data were missing for some of the colleges' activities. Therefore, in some cases, MDRC researchers estimated costs of particular activities based on the average costs associated with such activities at other colleges.[28] Additionally, in selected cases, salary information for certain staff and faculty was unavailable, and so the MDRC estimates are based on average salaries of staff with comparable roles at that college, salaries of other similarly situated college personnel, or colleges' published averages for these staff positions. Also, given that this study was drafted before colleges had completed their Achieving the Dream implementation period, expenditures of reallocated employee time for ongoing activities occurring in the spring 2009 semester are estimated based on colleges' expected patterns of spending.

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includes the actual expenditures of the Lumina grant from 2004 through spring 2008 and estimates for the 2008-2009 academic year.

[28]See Appendix C for details.

Adjustments to Expenditures

Given the colleges' different locations and sizes, some level of variability is expected among their investments. However, certain aspects of their financing can be adjusted in order to provide a clearer comparison across these schools. For instance, colleges that are located in more expensive cities are likely to have higher expenditures than colleges that are located in more rural settings. Additionally, given that this report examines five years of data, inflation could skew an analysis of these colleges' expenditures.

In order to control for these differences, this report employs several adjustments typical in cost analyses. These include adjustments for:

- **Inflation.** This report adjusts all expenditures of external grants and institutional funds (excluding reallocated employee time)[29] to 2008 dollars by inflating costs incurred in 2004-2007 by the given annual percentage change in the Consumer Price Index (CPI) and by deflating costs incurred in 2009.

- **Cost of living.** This report standardizes the cost-of-living expenses for different locations by multiplying an individualized cost-of-living adjustment to the salaries and expenditures for each school.[30]

- **Overhead rate.** When calculating reallocated employee time, salaries were multiplied by each college's standard overhead rate, which amounted to an average of 50 percent of individuals' salaries.

Two cost adjustments that were not undertaken in this study include discounting and depreciation. Specifically, this study does not apply a discount rate or depreciate the cost of large equipment purchases.

Research Questions

Using the methods described above, this study seeks to capture the overall investments that five case study colleges made in improving their institutions and their students' achievement. It should be noted that, given the relative newness of Achieving the Dream, it is difficult to attach a monetary value to the benefits that the initiative might create at this current stage. The initiative's overall goal is to increase students' success; however, these improvements in student

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[29]To convert staff hours to dollars, MDRC collected salary information from 2008. Since this study is reporting costs in terms of 2008 dollars, in-kind contributions do not need to be adjusted for inflation.

[30]Cost-of-living adjustments were obtained for each city and town using the American Chamber of Commerce Researchers Association (ACCRA) Cost Of Living Index (COLI) (Council for Community and Economic Research [C2ER] Web site: http://www.coli.org/).

outcomes may take several years to materialize. Additionally, it is difficult to attach a monetary value to these changes and produce a dollar-for-dollar estimate of what investing in Achieving the Dream provides. Therefore, rather than a traditional cost-benefit analysis, this study provides a qualitative analysis of colleges' expenditures. It is designed to help colleges and funders understand the type of financial commitment that is needed to undertake an institutional improvement process like Achieving the Dream and to illustrate the financial choices of these five case study colleges. In sum, this study seeks to answer the following questions:

- How much did colleges spend on implementing a student success-oriented, institutional improvement process at their schools?

- What types of resources did colleges access in supporting their reforms?

- How did colleges' spending change across their five-year participation in Achieving the Dream?

- In what activities did colleges invest most heavily, and which of these were the key drivers of colleges' investments?

- What are the overall lessons learned for other colleges and funders considering a similar model of institutional improvement?

The Organization of This Report

The following chapters highlight the key themes related to five colleges' investments in becoming data-driven, success-oriented institutions. Chapter 2 examines these colleges' overall expenditures on their institutional improvement process, with a focus on the total amounts that the colleges invested, the timing of their expenditures, and the types of resources that the colleges utilized in making these investments. Chapter 3 explores colleges' investments in the overall reform process and includes a detailed summary of the key drivers of colleges' investments in implementing these new practices. Chapter 4 summarizes the lessons learned from this analysis and concludes with key lessons for practitioners, policymakers, and the nationwide movement to increase community colleges' success.

Chapter 2

Finding the Right Resources:
How Colleges Invested in Becoming
More Success-Oriented and Data-Driven Institutions

In an era of decreasing revenues and growing attention to accountability, community colleges face a critically important time for thinking about how they invest their resources. With numerous stakeholders pushing community colleges to document their efforts to improve student achievement, colleges must look toward transforming their operating culture. Achieving the Dream has laid out a framework for instituting such changes by encouraging a broad set of reforms, which range from increasing support for institutional research to developing targeted intervention strategies to revising strategic management systems to better support a focus on student achievement. While helpful for pushing colleges to focus on broader, systemic change, these diverse and wide-ranging activities also require that colleges carefully consider how, where, and with what resources they will invest in their institutional improvement process and their students' achievement.

While community colleges can generally draw on a number of resources to support such changes, little is known about how much colleges spend to accomplish these goals and with what supports they fund their efforts. This chapter seeks to provide an understanding of these investments by examining the overall expenditures to implement a schoolwide reform agenda at five case study colleges: Valencia Community College in Orlando, Florida; Tallahassee Community College in Tallahassee, Florida; South Texas College in McAllen, Texas; El Paso Community College in El Paso, Texas; and the University of New Mexico Gallup in Gallup, New Mexico (UNM-Gallup).

The analysis centers on three key aspects of the colleges' investments. First, this chapter outlines the colleges' total expenditures on their institutional reform process over the five-year period of their participation in Achieving the Dream, from 2004 through 2009. Second, the chapter analyzes the resources that the colleges used to support these changes. Finally, the colleges' spending by year is examined in order to understand how their expenditures may change over time. The key goal of this chapter is to identify the broader trends in colleges' investments in order to lay the groundwork for more in-depth analysis of their investments in particular activities.

Where Is the Money? Key Resources Supporting Community Colleges' Work

As noted in Chapter 1, states provide foundational support for community colleges' financing. On average, state funding provides the largest single contribution to two-year colleges (36 percent).[1] As Table 2.1 shows, however, state support makes up only a portion of community colleges' revenues, as these schools also depend on multiple other resources to support their educational offerings. Nationally, local funds (20 percent), tuition (17 percent), and federal funds (14 percent) together make up a larger proportion of colleges' overall support (about 51 percent).[2] Grants and subsidies from government agencies and foundations have also been an increasingly important funding stream for colleges interested in innovating their instructional and student services. For instance, many colleges rely on federal support provided through Titles III, IV, and V of the Higher Education Act of 1965 to develop more comprehensive academic and support services for low- and middle-income students.[3]

The colleges in this study found each of these resources important in implementing their Achieving the Dream reforms. Like most colleges in the country, these five institutions directed the majority of their internal revenues toward sustaining the infrastructure of the school, including staff and faculty salaries, buildings, and maintenance.[4] However, these dollars also represent an important resource for colleges' reforms, as many colleges choose to reallocate a significant amount of employee time to implement their institutional reforms. While this transfer of staff time does not necessarily represent a monetary expense for the college, it does engender, at the very least, an opportunity cost for the colleges' own management of its day-to-day activities and programs, as current staff are switched toward new roles and activities. As such, this study will capture the transfer of employee time as an investment that the colleges made in their Achieving the Dream improvements.

While spending on personnel represents a large amount of colleges' spending, most colleges also have smaller reserves of discretionary funds available, which can be used to support broader changes at the institution.[5] Colleges tend to use these funds selectively to develop new programming, policies, or infrastructure, with some colleges instituting competitive processes

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[1]Kenton, Schuh, Huba, and Shelley (2004); Cohen and Brawer (2003).

[2]Despite these overall trends, revenues can vary considerably across states. For instance, colleges in states with large community college systems (such as California, Florida, and Virginia) tend to receive three-quarters of their funding from the state while colleges in other states (such as Arizona, Illinois, and Michigan) are supported primarily by local funds. Funding can also vary year to year, depending on the country's economic climate. In years of economic decline, colleges tend to raise additional funds by increasing tuition (Cohen and Brawer, 2003; Katsinas and Tollefson, 2009).

[3]Almanac of Policy Issues (2003).

[4]Educational Commission of the States (2000).

[5]Educational Commission of the States (2000).

Achieving the Dream: Community Colleges Count

Table 2.1

**Revenues of Two-Year, Public Degree-Granting Institutions,
by Source of Revenue: Academic Year 2005-2006**

Source of Revenue	Percentage of Revenues
Tuition and fees	16.6
Federal funds[a]	14.1
State funds[b]	35.5
Local funds[c]	19.6
Private gifts and grants[d]	1.3
Sales and services[e]	4.2
Other[f]	8.5

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics; based on methods from Cohen and Brawer (2003).

NOTES: These characteristics are the latest available from the National Center for Education Statistics. Federal, state, and local funds exclude Federal Direct Student Loans.

    [a]Federal funds equal "operating federal grants and contracts," "nonoperating federal grants," and "nonoperating federal apropriations."

    [b]State funds equal "operating state grants and contracts," "nonoperating state grants," and "nonoperating state apropriations."

    [c]Local funds equal "operating local grants and contracts," "nonoperating local grants," and "nonoperating local apropriations."

    [d]Private gifts and grants include "nonoperating gifts" and "capital gifts and grants."

    [e]Sales and services include "sales and services of auxilary enterprises."

    [f]"Other" equals "other operating revenues," "other nonoperating revenues," "investment income," "capital appropriations," "additions to permanent endowments," and "other revenues and additions."

for departments or staff to bid for these monies.[6] These funds also represent an important resource for colleges' spending; thus, the flexible institutional dollars that the colleges spent on implementing their reforms are also examined in this report.

Additionally, each college in this study received a $450,000 grant from Lumina to spur its implementation of Achieving the Dream. Paid out in a $50,000 planning grant and several $100,000 lump sums over colleges' five-year participation in Achieving the Dream, these grants

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[6]Zachry and Orr (2009).

were intended as seed money to help colleges begin planning and implementing their Achieving the Dream goals. The grants were never intended to cover all the costs associated with Achieving the Dream activities but, rather, were intended to spur colleges to integrate the support for these reforms within their larger resource allocation systems. However, Lumina grants did provide an important foundation for colleges' implementation, and thus they are documented as a separate resource supporting colleges' reforms.

Finally, as illustrated in Boxes 2.1 and 2.2, most of the colleges in this study also financed their Achieving the Dream work using external grants from government agencies and private foundations. Most of the colleges formed committees and taskforces to apply for these grants, and they carefully planned how they would supplement their institutional reforms. External resources provided a substantial boon for colleges' innovations and thus represent an additional category of funding for colleges' reforms.

In sum, this report captures four different types of resources that colleges used to support the implementation of their institutional reform process: (1) the $450,000 Lumina grants that colleges received to implement Achieving the Dream, (2) the reallocation of existing employee time to develop and implement the colleges' reforms, (3) colleges' flexible institutional funds spent on developing new programs and policies, and (4) the external grants that colleges' received from foundations and government agencies. As is seen in the following pages, each of these four resources provided important supports for these colleges' efforts.

How Much Does It Cost? Colleges' Overall Spending on Institutional Reform

One main theme might sum up colleges' overall investments in Achieving the Dream: Colleges took seriously the initiative's push for them to invest heavily and widely in institutional change. As can be seen in Figure 2.1, the colleges in this study invested, on average, over $6 million, or 14 times the amount of their Lumina grants, over the course of their five-year participation in Achieving the Dream.[7] In implementing institutional reforms, colleges' investments ranged from a low of $2.9 million (UNM-Gallup) to a high of nearly $11 million (South Texas). The investments of the other colleges in the study ranged from $4.5 million (Tallahassee) to $6.1 million (El Paso) to $7.3 million (Valencia). The average investment across the colleges was $6.3 million.

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[7]Colleges' investments have been rounded to the nearest $100,000 and have been adjusted for inflation so that they represent 2008 real dollars. These estimates have also been adjusted for differences in cost of living and for overhead rates in staff salaries. See Chapter 1 and Appendix C for a description of adjustments made.

While these investments are substantial, readers should consider what these dollars represent and how they compare with college's overall revenues. First, as discussed above, many of these expenditures represent colleges' shifting of already-hired employee time to support the planning and implementation of their institutional reforms. Therefore, rather than reallocating hard dollars from the college's operating budget, these expenditures represent a redistribution of the salary and overhead of staff already accounted for in the colleges' overall spending. Additionally, as shown in Table 2.2, when comparing the investments with colleges' total revenues over five years, colleges' spending on their Achieving the Dream reforms represents a fraction of their overall finances. Indeed, among the large colleges in this study

Box 2.2

Summary of Major External Grants Used at Each College

Type of Grant/Funder	Purpose	College
Title III	Federal grant designed to help colleges expand their capacity to serve low-income students and boost self-sufficiency by providing funds to improve and strengthen the academic quality, institutional management, and fiscal stability of participating institutions	UNM-Gallup, Tallahassee
State of Florida Dr. Philip Benjamin Matching Program for Community Colleges	State Board of Education grant program that encourages private support to enhance community colleges (The program matches private grants with state funds on a 40:60 ratio. This program was suspended in 2008-2009 but is being funded in subsequent years.)	Tallahassee
Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board	State grant to fund Summer Bridge programs — intensive summer courses for students who place into developmental-level classes	El Paso, South Texas
Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation	Funded the construction and operation of two Early College High Schools	El Paso
Greater Texas Foundation	Funded the construction and operation of one Early College High School	El Paso
State of Texas Education Agency	Funded the construction and operation of one Early College High School	El Paso
U.S. Department of Education	Grant used to hire retention specialists in the college's student services division	South Texas
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services	Grant used to hire retention specialists in the college's student services division	South Texas
Texas Guarantee Loan Corporation	Grant used to hire retention specialists in the college's student services division	South Texas
Walmart	Small grant used for food and supplies for student service activities, diversity seminars, and student focus groups	Tallahassee
Public Agenda	Small grant awarded to colleges to assist in external engagement activities	UNM-Gallup, South Texas, Valencia

Achieving the Dream: Community Colleges Count

Figure 2.1

Total Expenditures, by College
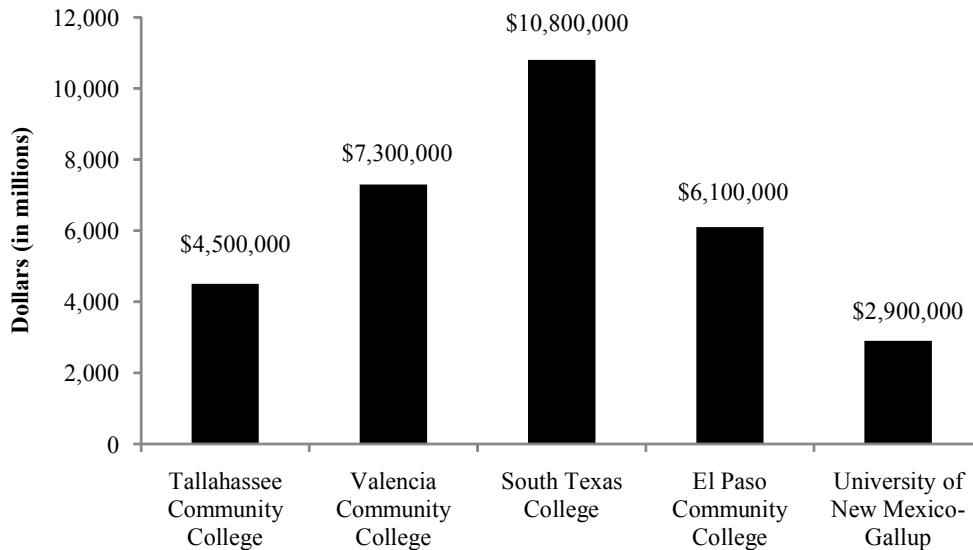
SOURCES: MDRC calculations using data collected from site-visit interviews, Lumina grant ledgers, and other budget documentation collected from each of the colleges.

NOTE: Totals are rounded to the nearest $100,000.

(Tallahassee, Valencia, El Paso, and South Texas), the colleges' institutional reform investments represented less than 2 percent of their overall revenues. Even for the smallest college in this study (UNM-Gallup), where reform spending represented a larger percentage of overall finances, the proportion of spending to overall revenues did not rise to 3 percent.

While larger colleges spent proportionally fewer dollars on their institutional reforms, the overall amount of colleges' spending did not always neatly jibe with institutional size. For example, South Texas, one of the midsize colleges in this study, had less revenue than other midsize schools but had the highest overall investment in Achieving the Dream (Table 2.2).[8] Thus, among the colleges in this study, institutional size and revenues did not always predict the level of colleges' investment in institutional reform.

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[8]Revenues in Table 2.2 differ from those in Chapter 1 (Table 1.2) because the revenues here have been adjusted for inflation to represent 2008 dollars.

Achieving the Dream: Community Colleges Count

Table 2.2

Overall Revenues and Expenditures on Achieving the Dream Activities, by College

College	FTE Enrollment (2006-2007)	2004-05 Revenues[a]	2005-06 Revenues[a]	2006-07 Revenues[a]	2007-08 Revenues[b]	2008-09 Revenues[b]	Approximate Total Revenues (2004-2009)	Achieving the Dream Investments (2004-2009)	Percentage of Average 5-Year Revenues
Tallahassee	10,310	95,153,217	100,206,453	117,424,498	117,424,498	117,424,498	547,633,163	4,500,000	0.8
Valencia	21,342	158,158,306	154,091,441	179,094,402	179,094,402	179,094,402	849,532,952	7,300,000	0.9
South Texas	11,793	131,536,082	134,203,964	135,074,109	135,074,109	135,074,109	670,962,373	10,800,000	1.6
El Paso	16,580	156,359,439	151,452,694	152,330,429	152,330,429	152,330,429	764,803,419	6,100,000	0.8
UNM-Gallup	1,728	16,566,789	33,704,994	19,720,644	19,720,644	19,720,644	109,433,715	2,900,000	2.7

SOURCES: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS); and MDRC calculations.

NOTES: Achieving the Dream investments are rounded to the nearest $100,000.

FTE = Full-time equivalent.

Revenues for 2004-05 represent Fiscal Year 2005.

Revenues for 2005-06 represent Fiscal Year 2006.

Revenues for 2006-07 represent Fiscal Year 2007.

Revenues are reported using Governmental Accounting Standards Board (GASB) principles and are derived by adding revenues from the following sources: tuition and fees revenues, state government appropriation revenues, local government appropriation revenues, federal operating grants and contracts, state operating grants and contracts, local operating grants and contracts, other operating sources, federal appropriations, federal nonoperating grants, state nonoperating grants, local nonoperating grants, gifts (including contributions from affiliated organizations), investment income, other nonoperating revenues, and total other revenues and additions.

[a]Revenues have been adjusted to Calendar Year 2008 dollars.

[b]Data for 2007-2008 and 2008-2009 are not yet available through IPEDS; therefore, MDRC made estimates for those years based on the latest revenue data available (2006-07).

Despite this, the smallest school in the study (UNM-Gallup) had much more limited revenues and, therefore, made relatively smaller investments in its Achieving the Dream reforms. Even though its investment was limited, however, this school also spent proportionally more of its overall institutional budget on Achieving the Dream than did the larger schools in this study. While its investment is still a relatively small proportion of overall revenues, this pattern suggests that small schools may need to invest proportionally more of their resources when undertaking a broad-scale institutional reform process like Achieving the Dream than do larger schools, which have more supports from which to draw.

Where Does the Money Come From? The Resources Used to Support Colleges' Reforms

While colleges' investments in institutional reform did not always mirror the size of their revenues, colleges did tend to spend heavily out of one particular resource when implementing their Achieving the Dream reforms: flexible institutional funds and reallocated employee time. As can be seen in Figure 2.2, four of the five colleges in this study spent $3.5 million to $9.5 million in institutional funds and reallocated employee time when implementing their Achieving the Dream reforms. This represents an investment of 8 to 21 times the value of the grants these colleges received from Lumina. These colleges' dependence on institutional funds and reallocated employee time far outweighed their use of other resources, with institutional resources supporting over 85 percent of colleges' spending on this work. Indeed, the colleges that invested most heavily from this resource (Valencia and South Texas) spent an average of $8 million of their institutional funds to support their reforms, or more than 9 times the value of any other resource available to them.

Examining the type of institutional resources used, Figure 2.3 shows that the colleges in this study tended to depend most heavily on their reallocated employee time to implement their reforms. El Paso is the only college that spent nearly equally from reallocated employee time and flexible institutional funds; each of the other colleges invested at least two times more of their employee resources than of their discretionary funds in implementing their Achieving the Dream reforms. This suggests that colleges tended to take advantage of the flexibility of their personnel by modifying or switching their roles to help further the college's improvement agenda rather than investing a large amount of new dollars in these changes.

The main exception to this rule is UNM-Gallup, which drew much more heavily from outside resources than from its own internal offerings. As shown in Figure 2.4, the use of institutional resources at UNM-Gallup was secondary to the use of external grants, with monies from government agencies making up the largest resource (55 percent) for its Achieving the Dream reforms. While external grants proved important for other colleges, they proved less important, making up only 8 to 13 percent of their overall support. This trend suggests that

Achieving the Dream: Community Colleges Count

Figure 2.2

Comparison of Resources, by College
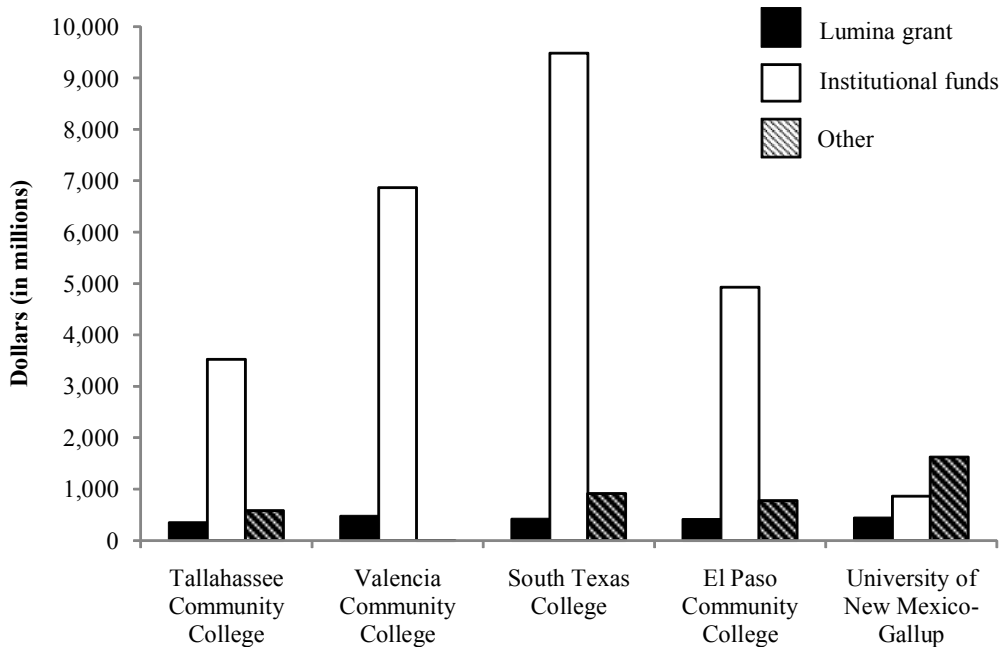
SOURCES: MDRC calculations using data collected from site-visit interviews, Lumina grant ledgers, and other budget documentation collected from each of the colleges.

NOTES: "Institutional funds" include the reallocation of employee time and colleges' investments of other flexible institutional funds.
    "Other" includes federal grants, state grants, and funding received from private funders.

external monies may play a particularly important role in small colleges' efforts to transform their institutions, as they are unable to rely on heavy revenues from the state and other sources.

Colleges' Lumina grants proved to be the smallest resource supporting their Achieving the Dream work. At four of the five colleges in this study, the Lumina grant made up less than 10 percent of the resources used to support their institutional reforms (Figure 2.4). Only at UNM-Gallup, with its relatively small size and lower revenues, did the Lumina grant make up a more substantial resource for funding its reforms (15 percent). This suggests that — much as the initiative intended — colleges' Achieving the Dream grants provided a minimal amount of seed money and that colleges were able to make significant investments from other funds to help support their work.

Figure 2.3

**Breakdown of Institutional Funds:
Reallocation of Employee Time Versus Flexible Institutional Funds**
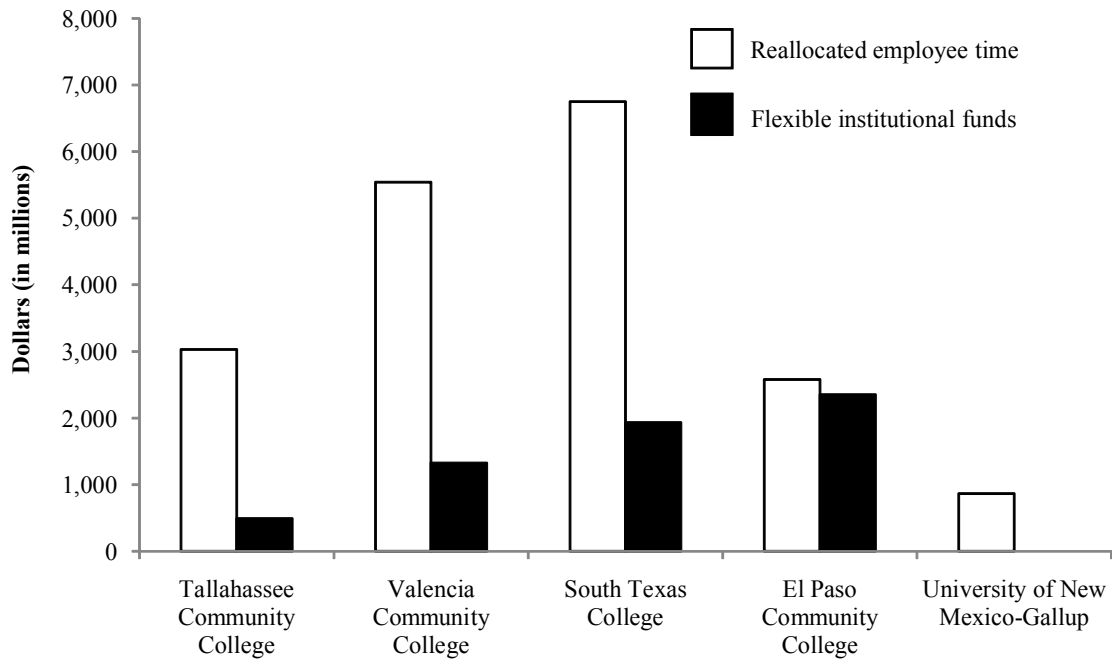
SOURCES: MDRC calculations using data collected from site-visit interviews and institutional budget documentation collected from each of the colleges.

NOTE: "Flexible institutional funds" include colleges' general funds that were reallocated to fund Achieving the Dream activities.

Gallup did not contribute any institutional general funds to Achieving the Dream.

Colleges' use of internal resources and external grants to support their institutional reforms is a key underpinning of the Achieving the Dream framework, as colleges are expected to reallocate their existing funds when institutionalizing promising policies and practices. The fact that the five colleges in this study depended heavily on these resources suggests that they were, in fact, able to connect their Achieving the Dream work with a broader institutional agenda. Furthermore, the colleges' use of external grants is particularly encouraging, given that most government and foundation funds are geared toward specifically defined projects. This suggests that while external grants may be targeted toward key college reforms, these grants may also support colleges' overall institutional improvements.

Achieving the Dream: Community Colleges Count

Figure 2.4

Distribution of Resources, by College
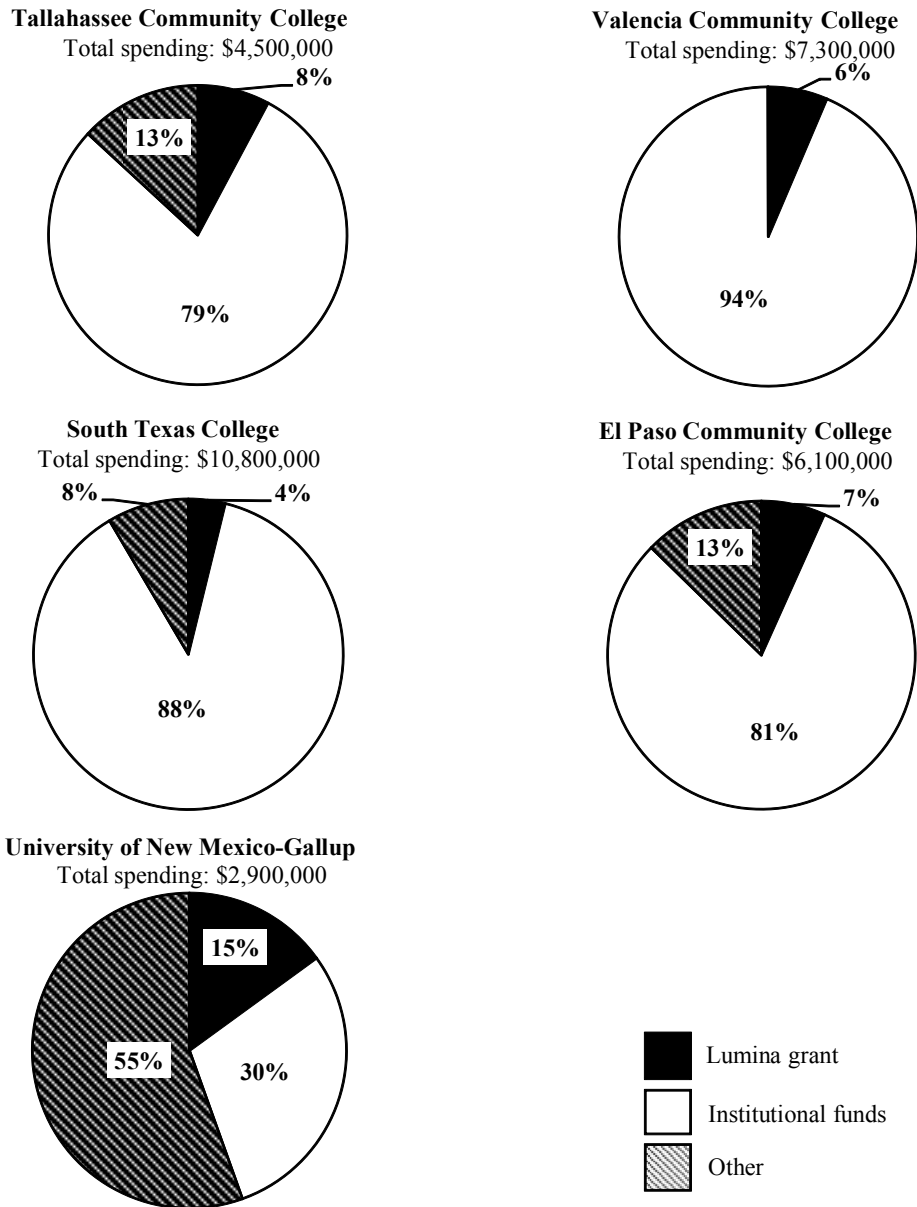
Tallahassee Community College
Total spending: $4,500,000

8%
13%
79%

Valencia Community College
Total spending: $7,300,000

6%
94%

South Texas College
Total spending: $10,800,000

8%
4%
88%

El Paso Community College
Total spending: $6,100,000

7%
13%
81%

University of New Mexico-Gallup
Total spending: $2,900,000

15%
55%
30%

■ Lumina grant

□ Institutional funds

▨ Other

SOURCES: MDRC calculations using data collected from site-visit interviews, Lumina grant ledgers, and other budget documentation collected from each of the colleges.

NOTES: "Institutional funds" include the reallocation of employee time and colleges' investments of other flexible institutional funds.
   "Other" includes federal grants, state grants, and funding received from private funders.

When to Spend? Colleges' Investments in Institutional Reform Over Time

The timing of colleges' investments is also important for understanding when these funds may be most needed. Colleges participating in the demonstration phase of Achieving the Dream had a total of five years to plan and implement their student success agenda.[9] As noted in Box 2.3, colleges are expected to roll out their implementation plans over the course of their participation in the initiative as they move from a first-year planning period (termed "planning year") to the four years of implementation (termed "Year 1 through Year 4" of implementation). Given this planned progression, colleges' expenditures are likely to vary from year to year as they move through different phases of their work.

As can be seen in Figure 2.5, the spending patterns of the five colleges in this study tended to reflect the initiative's overall design for colleges' implementation. Colleges tended to spend relatively few dollars in the early years of their work while steadily increasing their investments in the later years of implementation. Four of the five colleges in this study spent 20 percent or less of their overall budgets during their first two years in the initiative (corresponding to the planning year and Year 1 of implementation). However, a steady uptick in spending occurred during Year 2 of implementation, with most colleges' making about 20 to 25 percent of their overall investments during this time. Colleges tended to make the heaviest investments in their Achieving the Dream work in the final two years of implementation (Year 3 and Year 4). During this time, colleges invested about 50 to 60 percent of their resources on their Achieving the Dream efforts.

The investments that these colleges made over the course of five years reaffirm the initiative's timeline for colleges' implementation of their reforms. Colleges' low level of expenditures during the first two years in the initiative suggest that colleges were, indeed, spending much of this time planning and implementing their initial pilot programs and practices. Furthermore, the heavy spending that occurs in the final years of colleges' implementation further supports the initiative's expectations that colleges will spend these years ramping up effective policies and practices.

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[9]The demonstration phase of Achieving the Dream includes all the colleges that joined the initiative in 2004 (Round 1 colleges), 2005 (Round 2 colleges), 2006 (Round 3 colleges), and 2007 (Round 4 colleges). Achieving the Dream has now moved into a national expansion phase, whereby colleges now join the initiative for a minimum of two years.

Box 2.3

The Step-by-Step Process of Implementing Achieving the Dream

Achieving the Dream has set forth a detailed framework (Chapter 1, Figure 1.1) for colleges to use as they undertake their institutional improvements. Round I colleges that joined the initiative in 2004-2005 had five years to execute their reform plans. Here are the activities that correspond with each of the five steps in the institutional improvement process, in the expected order of implementation.

The Planning Year

- Foster leaders' commitment to improving student success, and analyze student outcomes data to identify priority areas for reform (Step 1).

- Develop an implementation plan for the college's future work, using data to prioritize actions (Step 2).

The Implementation Years (Years 1 Through 4)

- Begin executing plans by reforming policies and practices at the college, bringing a broad cross-section of people from the college and from the community into the planning (Step 3).

- Develop pilots of new interventions, and evaluate the effectiveness of these programs in increasing students' success (Step 4).

- Scale up and institutionalize those programs and practices that prove promising in helping increase students' success (Step 5).

This five-year period of planning and implementation has been the standard practice for most of the colleges that joined Achieving the Dream prior to 2009. However, the duration of this period has been revised for colleges that joined the initiative more recently, as now they are required to participate for only two years. Additionally, certain supports — such as the $450,000 Lumina grant or grants from other foundations — are not guaranteed with membership. Indeed, some colleges may fund their own way when joining the initiative, rather than receiving external support for their work. Despite these changes, colleges are still encouraged to undertake the same process in their reforms and to remain in Achieving the Dream to continue their work beyond the initial two-year commitment.

Figure 2.5

Total Investments, by College and Year
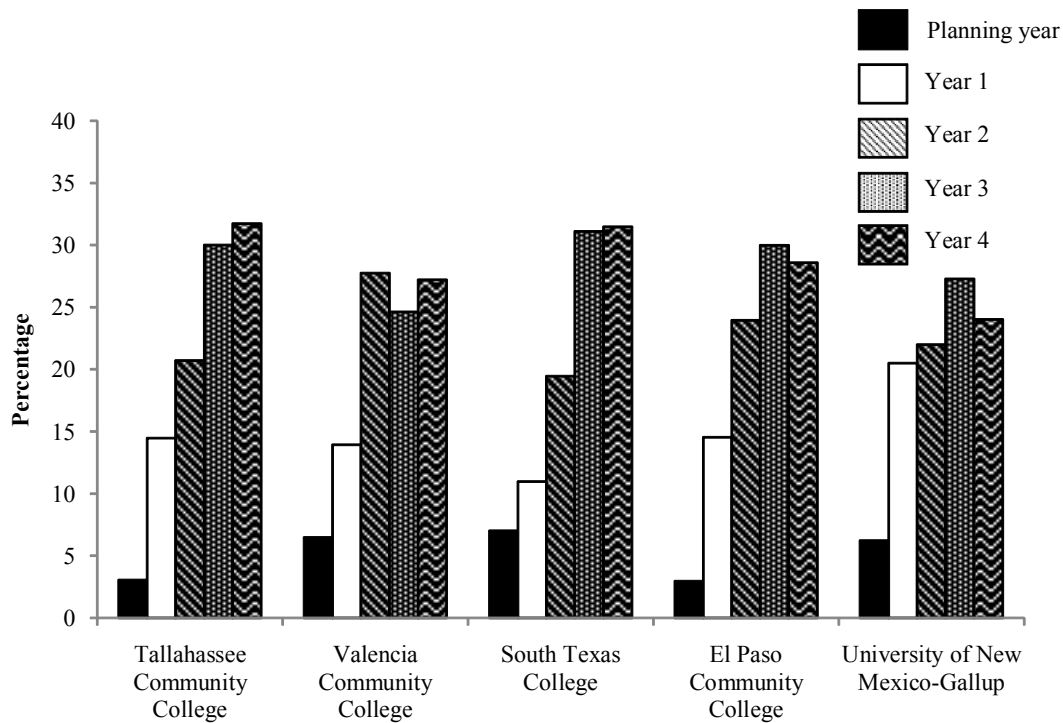
SOURCES: MDRC calculations using data collected from site-visit interviews, Lumina grant ledgers, and other budget documentation collected from each of the colleges.

NOTES: The planning year represents Fiscal Year 2005 and academic year 2004-2005. Year 1 represents Fiscal Year 2006 and academic year 2005-2006. Year 2 represents Fiscal Year 2007 and academic year 2006-2007. Year 3 represents Fiscal Year 2008 and academic year 2007-2008. Year 4 represents Fiscal Year 2009 and academic year 2008-2009.

Conclusion and Lessons

Given the five-year period for implementing Achieving the Dream, colleges' investments in their reforms can provide important lessons to colleges and funders as they consider implementing or supporting a large-scale institutional improvement process. One of the key lessons from this analysis is that colleges are likely to invest significant funds in this whole-school reform process; however, these funds are also likely to be a relatively moderate expense in comparison to colleges' overall finances. While the colleges in this study spent an average of $6.3 million on their Achieving the Dream work, these investments amounted to less than 5 percent of their overall revenues. Additionally, given that the colleges in this study outlaid 80

31

percent of their investments in the final three years of implementing Achieving the Dream, their investments in this work are likely to be concentrated into a shorter, more intensive period of spending. Finally, given the patterns with the midsize and large colleges' spending in this study, it appears that larger colleges may be able to depend more heavily on their own internal resources when developing institutional reforms. However, much smaller colleges, like UNM-Gallup, may need to turn to outside resources to help fund their endeavors.

While understanding colleges' general pattern of investments can help both colleges and funders determine when support is most needed, discerning what drives colleges' spending in the institutional reform process can be even more informative in helping these actors know in what they should invest. The next chapter of this report seeks to answer these questions by providing a more in-depth analysis of how colleges' invested their funds in specific areas of their reform process and what forces seemed to be the key drivers of their spending. In providing a fuller analysis of colleges' specific expenditures, this report hopes to provide an even more accurate picture of where colleges and funders may make best use of their resources when working toward increasing students' success.

Chapter 3

Making the Money Count:
How Did Colleges Invest in Data-Driven Reforms?

This chapter continues the examination of expenditures to implement a schoolwide reform agenda at five case study colleges: Valencia Community College in Orlando, Florida; Tallahassee Community College in Tallahassee, Florida; South Texas College in McAllen, Texas; El Paso Community College in El Paso, Texas; and the University of New Mexico Gallup in Gallup, New Mexico (UNM-Gallup).

While the colleges' overall spending on Achieving the Dream is important, of even more consequence is how they invested in the different activities aimed at increasing their students' success. Achieving the Dream has presented an overall framework for considering these changes, which outlines a number of specific areas that colleges should target. (See Chapter 1, Figure 1.1 and Table 1.3.) However, depending on where colleges start in the initiative, they may have different priorities for their work, resulting in a variety of potential investments over the course of five years. For instance, some may have weak institutional research (IR) departments, which they hope to further expand, while others may want to focus more concretely on developing new programs. While each of these activities is important to Achieving the Dream's overall improvement process, colleges may choose where and how much they invest in these activities.

As can be seen in Box 3.1, several of the colleges in this study had already made inroads into developing a success-oriented agenda prior to joining Achieving the Dream. Despite this, however, each of these colleges identified areas for improvement for their Achieving the Dream work, revealing that most colleges hoped to make investments in multiple areas. This chapter categorizes these investments and examines the specific activities that drove these colleges' expenditures. As discussed in Chapter 1, colleges' costs are analyzed across three broad groupings of activities: leadership and management, institutional research, and intervention strategies. Box 3.2 shows that these categories include multiple types of expenses related to the colleges' institutional improvement work, which range from travel to events and conferences to participation in committees to the purchase of IR equipment and software. The chapter discusses investments in specific types of work, such as professional development or the purchase of technology, as well as colleges' investments in particular types of staff. Finally, to determine when these investments were most prevalent, the chapter examines the colleges' expenses over time.

Box 3.1

**Baseline Capacity and Goals:
What Were the Colleges' Starting Points?**

When the five colleges in this study joined Achieving the Dream in 2004, each had a unique starting point. Not only did the colleges vary in basic institutional characteristics, but they also had diverse leadership, institutional research (IR), engagement, and student success capacities.

Tallahassee Community College. Tallahassee's president had been at the college for only two years on joining the initiative but had quickly shown an interest in improving student success by implementing data-driven reforms. Prior to Achieving the Dream, the college's IR division was relatively well developed, collecting and analyzing an array of qualitative and quantitative data. In terms of broad engagement, Tallahassee also engaged leaders across the college in its Strategic Forum, which set goals for institutional advancement and regularly used data to inform decision-making.

Goals of Achieving the Dream. In addition to the Strategic Forum, Tallahassee appointed a leadership team of administrators, faculty, students, and community members to guide its Achieving the Dream efforts. Early on, Tallahassee also outlined a clear plan to purchase SAS, a powerful data analysis tool, and hoped to train multiple stakeholders in the use of this program. The college also hoped to expand its professional development offerings, create a diversity initiative to bridge the cultural divide between faculty and students, and develop Individual Learning Plans for students.

Valencia Community College. In 2004, Valencia's president was still fairly new to the college but had shown strong leadership in developing its student success agenda. Staff in the IR division were experienced with longitudinal data analysis and often disaggregated outcomes by ethnicity. Valencia had a strong tradition of engaging its faculty and staff. Prior to joining Achieving the Dream, Valencia had tried numerous strategies to improve the success of at-risk students, and it planned to use the initiative to build on selected strategies that demonstrated success and to bring those strategies to scale.

Goals of Achieving the Dream. From the inception of Achieving the Dream, Valencia was committed to garnering broad-based support for its strategies and interventions. Instead of identifying a team of administrators as the primary leadership team, Valencia diffused responsibility among three leadership groups, which involved faculty and staff throughout the college. Like Tallahassee, the college planned to further upgrade its already-strong IR capacities by investing in SAS and hiring new staff to manage and implement the new software. Among the key strategies that Valencia selected for further investigation were College Success courses, learning communities, and supplemental learning.

(continued)

Box 3.1 (continued)

El Paso Community College. Until 2001, El Paso had gone through unsettled times. The college had experienced the turnover of seven presidents in 10 years, and faculty and staff had become discouraged by the lack of leadership and direction. When its new president arrived in 2001, however the college was able to move forward on a more positive, collaborative path. Another important milestone occurred in 2002, when the college began a Developmental Education Initiative with Title V funds. In the years leading up to Achieving the Dream, its IR department had become moderately developed, and staff were collecting basic qualitative and quantitative data on student outcomes. In 2003, four faculty and staff committees were formed and did major reconnaissance on the college's students and the community's needs.

Goals of Achieving the Dream. Unlike Valencia, El Paso depended primarily on its senior administrators to plan and implement Achieving the Dream efforts. El Paso also recognized early on that it would need to invest in SAS to manage data analysis and to increase staff in its IR division. The college entered the initiative with a strong focus on student success initiatives. Key among its goals were the enhancement of developmental education students' success and the improvement of entering students' preparedness for college.

University of New Mexico-Gallup. The president of UNM-Gallup had served only since 2002 but had already instituted a campuswide planning process by the time the college joined Achieving the Dream. Because of its small size, the college had only one IR staff member, who had worked to distribute surveys and carry out the assessment of programs. The college also had a Campus Council to which all committees reported, and a few burgeoning student success initiatives, such as Freshmen Seminars.

Goals of Achieving the Dream. UNM-Gallup entered Achieving the Dream by appointing a strong leadership team that included many administrators. The college planned on increasing its IR capacity and its use of data to assess program effectiveness. To improve the success of students — drawn primarily from an academically underprepared, Native American population — the college planned to create more dialogue with local high schools so that students would enter college better prepared to succeed. Aside from growing its Freshmen Seminar (which later became college success courses), UNM-Gallup wanted to create a Transitional Studies division for all students who placed into developmental education courses.

(continued)

South Texas College. South Texas entered Achieving the Dream with a well-established president who had led the college since its inception. It also had the advantage of a large, highly developed IR division that produced an annual fact book on student outcomes. In December 2003, the president had established a Student Success Taskforce to investigate why students were repeating courses, and a large qualitative study ensued in the year leading up to Achieving the Dream. As a Title V college, South Texas had a number of initiatives to address students in developmental education courses, and it planned to use Achieving the Dream as a vehicle to further those efforts.

<u>Goals of Achieving the Dream</u>. In 2004, South Texas had just completed an important review of its programs and policies. Based on these findings, the college approached Achieving the Dream with plans to increase its data capacity by purchasing a data warehouse and increasing the IR staff. The college also hoped to invest in a blend of student success initiatives in order to increase students' achievement. Additionally, the college hoped to create an integrated system to manage its institutional reform process and bring a number of faculty and staff into the planning and development process.

Investments in Leadership and Management

Key among Achieving the Dream's recommendations for implementing a student success-oriented institutional improvement process is that college leaders are heavily involved in establishing and promoting their institution's student success agenda. College administrators are expected to be the key actors in establishing the college's reform agenda and maintaining the institution's movement toward a greater focus on students' success. These leaders are also expected to engage a number of stakeholders in the development and implementation of the college's reform priorities. For instance, faculty and staff are expected to help lead the reform process, by analyzing student outcomes data, participating in larger planning committees, and developing intervention strategies. Achieving the Dream also recommends that colleges involve multiple other stakeholders in this process, including business leaders, community members, and students. Finally, colleges are encouraged to establish professional development opportunities for faculty and staff that are geared toward advancing their student success reforms.

Each of these activities plays an important role in helping colleges lead and manage their institutional reform process. As can be seen in Figure 3.1, all the colleges in this study devoted significant resources toward establishing and maintaining their leadership and management of this work. They each spent at least 15 percent of their Achieving the Dream resources on these activities, with some schools devoting more than 30 or 40 percent of their

Box 3.2

**Typical Expenses Related to Colleges' Investments in
Leadership and Management, Institutional Research, and Strategies**

Leadership and Management

- Professional development for faculty, staff, and IR staff (includes travel to conferences, workshops, or other off-site professional development; SAS training and/or other on-site professional development)

- Committee and taskforces

- External engagement (community meetings, collaboration with school districts)

- Faculty and staff analysis of student outcomes (such as graduation rates, course repeats, focus groups)

Institutional Research (IR)

- Hiring technical staff (such as new programmers, qualitative researchers)

- Consultant fees

- Data management (including collection, analysis, and evaluation)

- IR equipment (such as computers, servers)

- Technology and software (such as SAS, data dashboards)

- Licenses and membership fees (such as for software, user groups)

Strategies

- Faculty stipends

- Release time for faculty and staff

- Supplies (such as books, materials, and media)

- Consultant fees

- Hiring of full-time and adjunct faculty to implement intervention strategies

- Operating costs of new programs or facilities

- Hospitality

- Communication and marketing (includes radio and newspaper ads, billboards)

Achieving the Dream: Community Colleges Count

Figure 3.1

Allocation of Expenditures in Key Activities, by College

Tallahassee Community College
Total spending: $4,500,000

18%
37%
45%

Valencia Community College
Total spending: $7,300,000

32%
55%
13%

South Texas College
Total spending: $10,800,000

33%
53%
14%

El Paso Community College
Total spending: $6,100,000

15%
22%
64%

University of New Mexico-Gallup
Total spending: $2,900,000

24%
69%
7%

■ Leadership and management

□ Institutional research

▨ Strategies
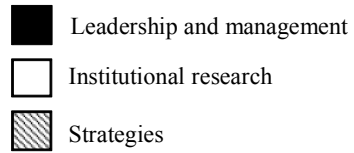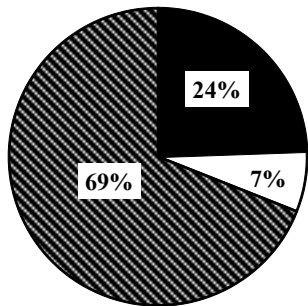
SOURCES: MDRC calculations using data collected from site-visit interviews, Lumina grant ledgers, and other budget documentation collected from each of the colleges.

expenses to this work. Table 3.1 shows that Valencia dedicated the greatest proportion of resources ($4 million, or 55 percent) to leadership and management and that South Texas was a close second ($3.5 million, or 33 percent). UNM-Gallup, as the smallest school in this study, had the lowest level of spending on leadership and management ($700,000); however, this represented a larger proportion of its overall spending (24 percent). Falling in the middle of these schools in spending on leadership and management were El Paso ($900,000, or 15 percent) and Tallahassee ($1.7 million, or 37 percent).

Achieving the Dream: Community Colleges Count

Table 3.1

Expenditures for Leadership and Management, Institutional Research, and Strategies, by College

Dollars	Tallahassee Community College	Valencia Community College	South Texas College	El Paso Community College	University of New Mexico-Gallup
Leadership and management	1,700,000	4,000,000	3,500,000	900,000	700,000
Institutional research	2,000,000	900,000	1,500,000	1,300,000	200,000
Intervention strategies	800,000	2,400,000	5,800,000	3,900,000	2,000,000
Total	4,500,000	7,300,000	10,800,000	6,100,000	2,900,000

SOURCES: MDRC calculations using data collected from site-visit interviews, Lumina grant ledgers, and other budget documentation collected from each of the colleges.

NOTE: Totals are rounded to the nearest $100,000.

Figure 3.2 shows that, overall, the colleges in this study had a relatively stable rate of spending on their leadership and management across all five years of implementing their student success agenda. Colleges' spending on this work began with a moderate level of investment during their planning year (averaging 14 percent) and increased during the later years of the initiative to an average range of 20 to 25 percent. As might be expected, such findings suggest that leadership and management activities were important throughout the colleges' implementation of their institutional reforms, as these institutions sought to provide consistent guidance for this work.

Additionally, most of the colleges' leadership and management costs were supported primarily by reallocating employee time (Appendix Figure B.1). Each of the colleges funded 45

Achieving the Dream: Community Colleges Count

Figure 3.2

Leadership and Management: Average Expenditures, by Year
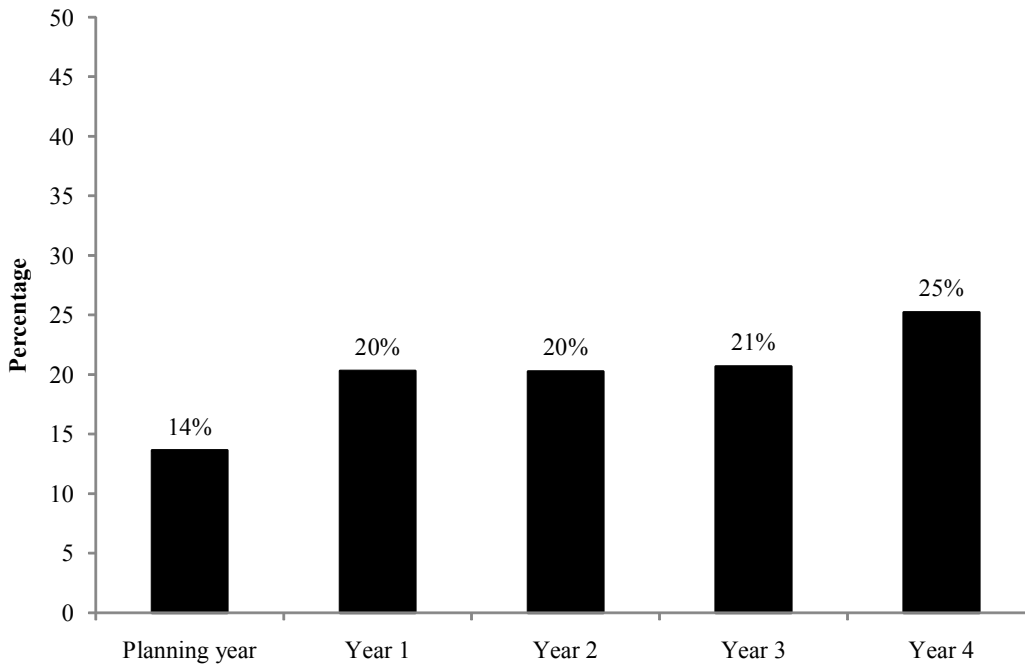
NOTES: The planning year represents Fiscal Year 2005 and academic year 2004-2005. Year 1 represents Fiscal Year 2006 and academic year 2005-2006. Year 2 represents Fiscal Year 2007 and academic year 2006-2007. Year 3 is Fiscal Year 2008 and academic year 2007-2008. Year 4 is Fiscal Year 2009 and academic year 2008-2009.

MDRC combined the expenditures by year at each of the five colleges in order to show an overall average for spending by year.

percent or more of its leadership and management activities by reallocating the time of administrators, faculty, and staff to implementing its Achieving the Dream reforms. South Texas College and Valencia had the highest overall investments, funding over 85 percent of their leadership and management activities by reallocating the time of their employees. Some colleges (Tallahassee, Valencia, and El Paso) also tapped into their flexible institutional funds to support their reforms. However, external grants and resources — including the colleges' Lumina grants of an estimated $450,000 to support the development and implementation of their Achieving the Dream goals and plans — were also important supports at UNM-Gallup, Tallahassee, and El Paso.

Investments in Specific Activities

Committees

With a few exceptions, colleges tended to make similar investments in specific activities within leadership and management. Figure 3.3 shows that, overall, colleges tended to invest most in their committee work, with most colleges devoting 50 percent or more of their leadership and management resources to these activities. South Texas, Valencia, and UNM-Gallup had the highest proportional investments in committees, devoting 61 to 71 percent of their resources to these pursuits. El Paso also dedicated significant funds to committees (53 percent); only Tallahassee gave proportionally less (19 percent) to this work.

As might be expected from these investments, all colleges in this study developed specific teams to lead the schools' overall reform agenda. Most of the schools based these groups on Achieving the Dream's recommended leadership model, by creating a "core team," tasked with leading the colleges' overarching improvement process, and a "data team" that managed and oversaw the colleges' research and data analysis. However, the colleges also developed a number of other specialized taskforces devoted to analyzing a particular issue (such as students' progression in developmental education) or a particular policy (such as the colleges' cutoff scores for placement into developmental education). Many of these specialized committees were offshoots from the colleges' larger leadership teams and brought together faculty and staff who had expertise in particular areas of interest.

The level of colleges' investment in their committees clearly flows from the priorities that the colleges established for their Achieving the Dream work (Box 3.1). For instance, as noted in its beginning Achieving the Dream plans, UNM-Gallup designated a number of senior administrators to lead its Achieving the Dream work, exemplifying a more top-heavy approach to institutional reform. As such, UNM-Gallup outlaid a significant amount of resources for these higher-paid staff with funds that nearly doubled the amount of monies used by faculty and staff (Appendix Table B.1). Both South Texas and Valencia also devoted a significant amount of funding to administrators' committee work, spending more than $900,000; however, these schools also engaged many other stakeholders in this work — including numerous midlevel administrators, faculty, and staff — totaling over $1.5 million at each of these two colleges.

Box 3.3 describes how both Valencia and South Texas made an intentional effort to create a bottom-up process of change and, therefore, involved large numbers of faculty and staff in their Achieving the Dream work. Both schools tasked multiple faculty and staff with leading new committees, assessment procedures, and/or reforms. One example of this is South Texas's Assessment, Placement, and Matriculation Committee, which conducted a review of the placement scores for developmental education courses in Texas, ensuring that students were appropriately placed within these classes and administering ongoing analysis of the students in

Achieving the Dream: Community Colleges Count

Figure 3.3

Leadership and Management: Total Expenditures in Key Areas, by College
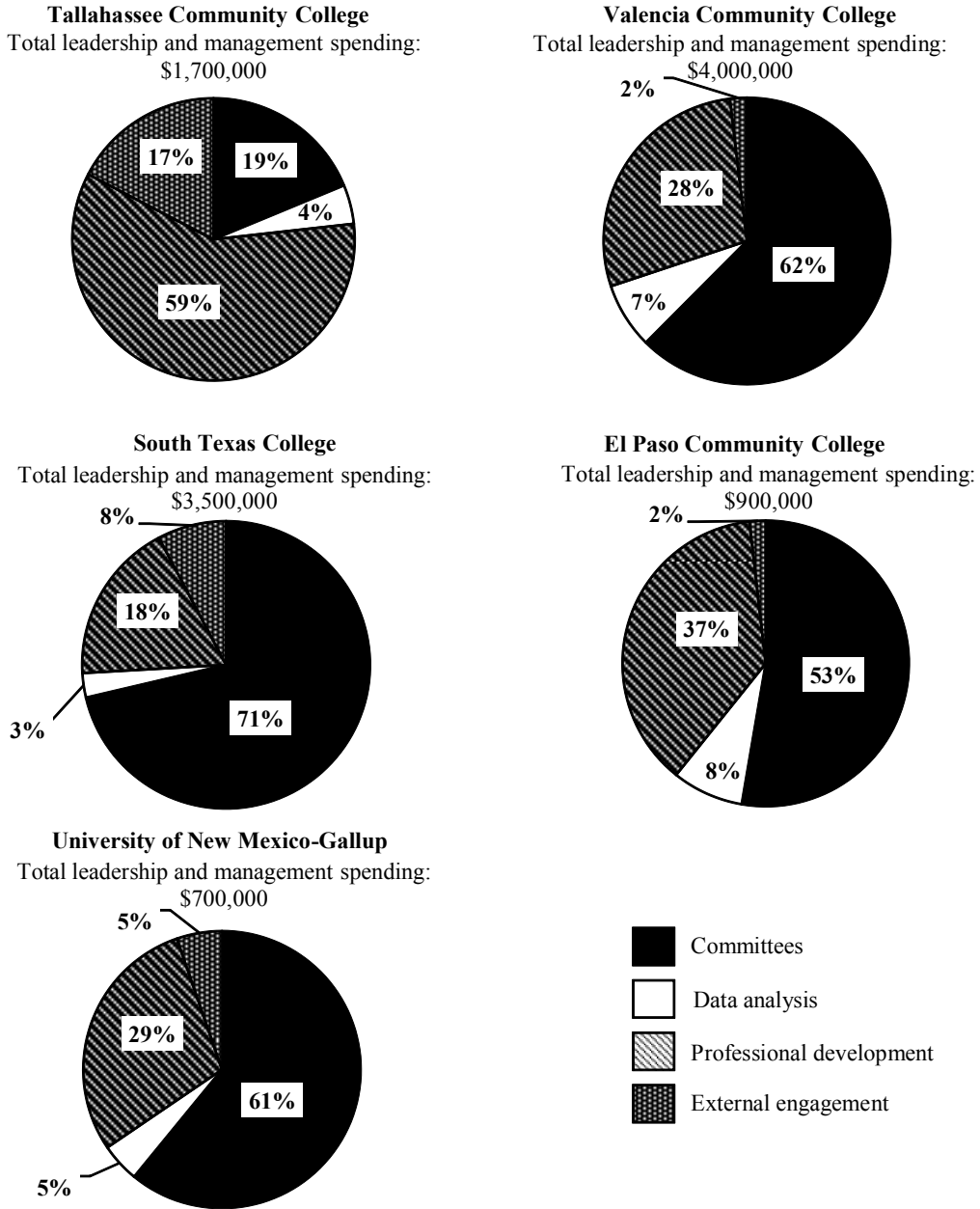
Tallahassee Community College
Total leadership and management spending:
$1,700,000

Valencia Community College
Total leadership and management spending:
$4,000,000

South Texas College
Total leadership and management spending:
$3,500,000

El Paso Community College
Total leadership and management spending:
$900,000

University of New Mexico-Gallup
Total leadership and management spending:
$700,000

- ■ Committees
- □ Data analysis
- ▨ Professional development
- ▩ External engagement

SOURCES: MDRC calculations using data collected from site-visit interviews, Lumina grant ledgers, and other budget documentation collected from each of the colleges.

Box 3.3

**Broad-Based Engagement at Valencia Community College
and South Texas College**

As part of Achieving the Dream, colleges are expected to engage the broader college community and external stakeholders in their student success agenda. While the colleges in this study were successful in engaging their stakeholders, each had a slightly different approach to its engagement strategy. Valencia and South Texas were unique in that they were able to harness continuous, bottom-up support from faculty and staff for many of their Achieving the Dream activities. How were these colleges able to build this expansive network of engagement?

Valencia. Valencia is a large, multicampus college with a strong tradition of collaboration, decentralized decision-making, and shared governance. Leaders at Valencia tend to govern more through discussion and consensus-building than by directives. On joining Achieving the Dream, Valencia created a tripartite structure of governance that allowed more individuals to be involved in the reform process. The College Learning Council was charged with making executive decisions about the objectives and evaluation of the initiative, while day-to-day execution was assigned to a coordinating team. Valencia also designated a team of 20 internal consultants from a broad cross-section of frontline faculty and staff to identify priorities and to suggest policy and program changes. Administrators found that this careful design allowed them to avoid potential disconnects between decision-makers and implementers and between central administration and Valencia's four campuses.

South Texas. Established in 1993, South Texas was still developing and expanding rapidly when it joined Achieving the Dream. To handle the initiative's accelerated changes and new priorities, the college created an integrated system of committees and taskforces to manage the work. It also pushed for collegewide participation in the review of student success issues, and faculty and staff were expected to work together and develop creative solutions for change. In 2005, South Texas created three committees led by faculty and staff from across the college: Comprehensive Student Advising; Shared Accountability for Student Learning; and Assessment, Placement, and Matriculation. The chairs from each of these committees also participated on the college's data team and shared their views on program effectiveness. Members of the data team also served on the core team, which was the primary governing body at the school. Finally, members of the president's cabinet served as the final sounding board of major decisions made about student success programs. Through this coordinated system, South Texas created a forum for reviews of program recommendations while also providing a framework for broad-based support of new, more effective programs and policies.

developmental education courses. This heavy level of involvement among faculty, staff, and administrators helps explain the large number of investments that Valencia and South Texas made in their committees and taskforces.

Professional Development

While most of the schools in this study devoted significant funds to their committee work, they also dedicated substantial resources to professional development for their faculty, staff, and administrators (Figure 3.3). Tallahassee concentrated the majority of its leadership and management resources — 59 percent — on professional development activities. However, all the schools in this study spent approximately 20 percent or more of their leadership and management funds on professional development.

The type of staff that these professional development funds supported tended to vary by college. Figure 3.4 shows that, overall, the colleges tended to invest in the development and training of their faculty and staff over their administrators, with each college devoting more than one-third of its professional development funds to these personnel. Two colleges (Tallahassee and Valencia) overwhelmingly supported the professional development of faculty and staff, with two-thirds or more of their funding going to their training. Others (El Paso, South Texas, and UNM-Gallup) tended to provide more funds for administrators' professional development. Only Tallahassee and El Paso invested substantial resources — approximately 25 percent of their professional development funds — in the technical training and development of IR staff.[1]

Professional development at these five colleges consisted primarily of two types of activities: (1) in-state and out-of-state travel to conferences, events, and trainings and (2) in-house staff development opportunities. Nearly all the colleges supported faculty, staff, and administrators in attending an assortment of national conferences, such as Achieving the Dream's annual Strategy Institute meeting and the American Association of Community Colleges (AACC) conference. Some also supported staff attendance at local and state conferences or organizational meetings, many of which were devoted to specific leadership or institutional practices within the state. Additionally, some funds were dedicated to professional development directly linked with these colleges' strategies. For instance, El Paso visited several other colleges to learn about their developmental math programs, and members from South Texas College attended a weeklong training at Evergreen State College in Olympia, Washington, that focused on learning communities.

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[1]Professional development for IR staff focuses primarily on technical training in software and new equipment rather than on attendance at general conferences or other trainings.

Achieving the Dream: Community Colleges Count

Figure 3.4

**Leadership and Management: Professional Development Expenditures,
by Employee Level and College**
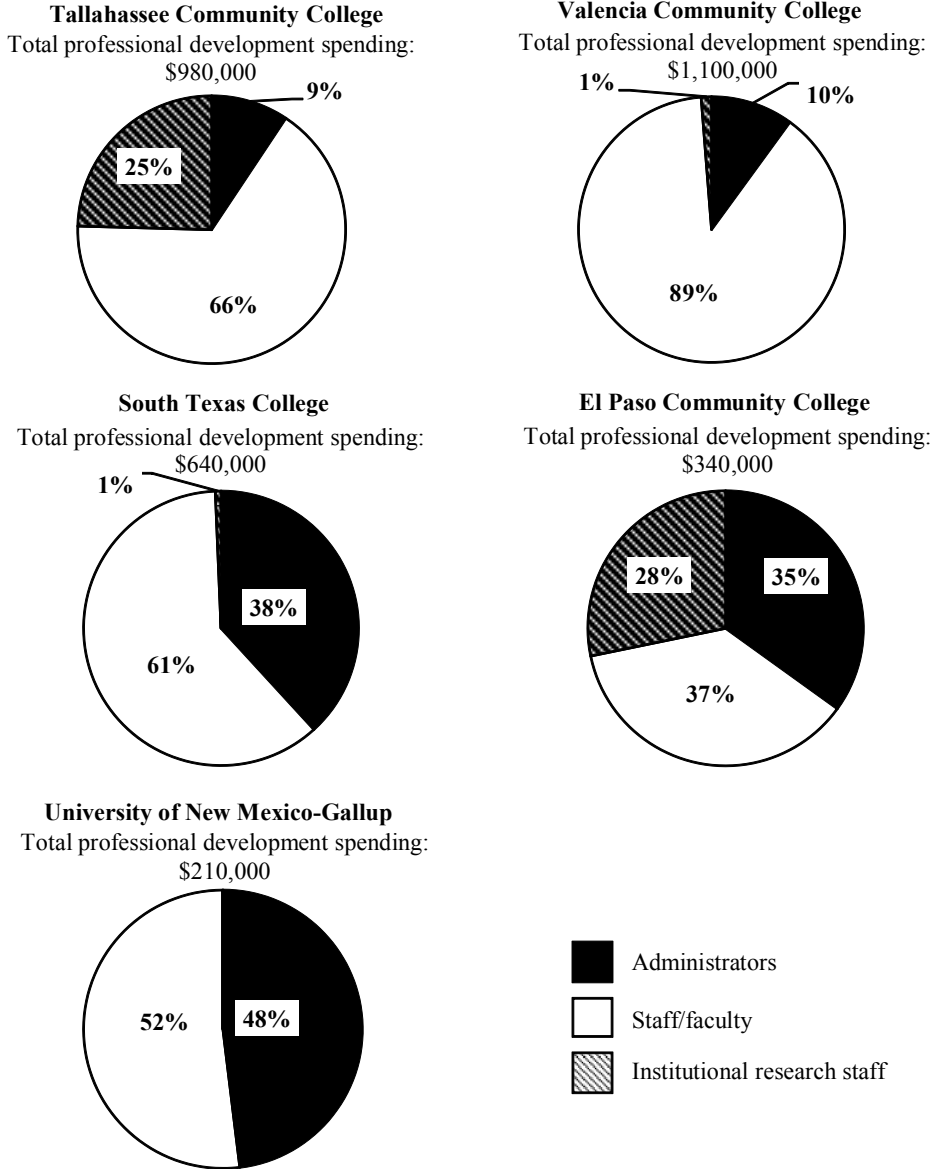
Tallahassee Community College
Total professional development spending:
$980,000

- 9%
- 25%
- 66%

Valencia Community College
Total professional development spending:
$1,100,000

- 1%
- 10%
- 89%

South Texas College
Total professional development spending:
$640,000

- 1%
- 38%
- 61%

El Paso Community College
Total professional development spending:
$340,000

- 28%
- 35%
- 37%

University of New Mexico-Gallup
Total professional development spending:
$210,000

- 52%
- 48%

■ Administrators

□ Staff/faculty

▨ Institutional research staff

SOURCES: MDRC calculations using data collected from site-visit interviews, Lumina grant ledgers, and other budget documentation collected from each of the colleges.

NOTE: Each category or level of employee shown on the pie charts includes costs associated with the reallocation of time as well as hard costs incurred at that level of employment (such as trainings, conference fees, and meeting materials and supplies).

While each of these schools supported attendance at off-site conferences and meetings, Valencia and Tallahassee devoted significant resources to developing on-site professional development opportunities. First, Valencia developed a cadre of internal consultants by using its own faculty and staff to train others on-site at the college. Generally, these internal consultants taught skills related to specific interventions, such as their learning communities and supplement learning programs. These activities were a strong driver of Valencia's professional development expenditures. Similarly, Tallahassee created a new Center for Employee Enrichment to support on-site training for faculty and staff, which accounted for over 80 percent of its professional development costs. Therefore, while some colleges focused on off-site professional development, these schools centered their work on developing resources within their own institutions to support faculty and staff training.

Data Analysis

In contrast to their relatively heavy investments in committees and professional development, most colleges devoted few resources to involving faculty, staff, and administrators in the colleges' data analysis, with all schools dedicating less than 10 percent of their resources to this work. As might be expected, most schools tasked their IR departments with handling the day-to-day evaluation and research activities at the college, and many schools spent significant sums on this work. (See Figure 3.1, Appendix Table B.1, and "Investments in Institutional Research," below.) However, engaging the wider college campus in the analysis of student outcomes data is also an important tenet in the Achieving the Dream model of institutional improvement. The initiative believes that exposing faculty and staff to students' traditionally poor outcomes will spur these personnel toward even greater efforts for reform. Thus, while colleges' IR departments may handle the technical aspects of the analysis, faculty and staff are expected to be highly engaged in examining these outcomes as well.

While most of the schools in this study dedicated fewer resources (roughly $30,000 to 100,000) to involve their employees in IR work, Valencia spent much more on this work, contributing nearly $300,000 to involve faculty, staff, and administrators in data analysis (Appendix Table B.1). Valencia's higher spending is related to two key activities. First, it created a data team that included members from across the college to analyze and assess data on a regular basis. Second, it spent heavily on implementing new software to analyze student outcomes and encouraged faculty and staff outside the IR office to use it. Thus, Valencia made concerted efforts to involve faculty and staff in data analysis, thereby explaining its increased investments in this work.

While the involvement of faculty, staff, and administrators in data analysis was light, colleges did allow specific opportunities for such engagement to occur. For example, adminis-

trators and staff at UNM-Gallup contributed time to developing student surveys and an evaluation plan of its programs. At South Texas College, administrators participated in a committee that analyzed the graduation process and rate, and various members from across the college led student focus groups. This reveals that though the investments in this work may have been small, some of the colleges in this study were actively working to involve the wider campus community in understanding their students' achievement.

Engagement of External Stakeholders

Although it was a relatively small expense in comparison to other activities, the engagement of external stakeholders — including business leaders and members of the community — was an important task for several of the colleges in this study. All the colleges sought to involve these individuals, as each of the schools devoted at least minor amount of expenses to these tasks. However, these tasks were particularly important at South Texas, UNM-Gallup, and Tallahassee, which dedicated 5 to 17 percent of their leadership and management resources to this work. They invested a substantial amount of faculty, staff, and administrator time in bringing community leaders into their reform process and inviting these individuals to attend forums or "community conversations" with their leaders and staff. These colleges also had faculty and staff manage and promote these forums within their communities and schools. Most of these colleges also worked with Public Agenda — an Achieving the Dream partner that has expertise in community engagement — to facilitate the involvement of these external stakeholders.

These findings suggest that external engagement may be able to be undertaken at relatively low cost to colleges. South Texas, UNM-Gallup, and Tallahassee each made important advancements toward involving the community in their reform efforts with relatively little expense. Their low investment may have resulted from the fact that these activities were often organized by one or two lower-level staff members and were led by one or two higher-level administrators for a brief amount of time. Additionally, the activities tended to only occur once or twice a year. Should colleges decide to involve higher-level staff more broadly or to hold such events more continuously, it is likely that these expenses would be heavier.

Investments in Institutional Research

Another key priority in Achieving the Dream's model for institutional improvement is the colleges' use and analysis of student outcomes data, corresponding to Step 2 of the initiative's framework: Use data to prioritize actions (Chapter 1, Figure 1.1). In this step, colleges are expected to involve faculty, staff, and administrators in the analysis of longitudinal student

outcomes data to identify gaps in students' achievement, which, in turn, will be used to develop key areas for improvement at the college.[2] Given that institutional research tends to be a weak link for most community colleges, many institutions must look toward further developing their IR capacity in order to undertake this work. Such reforms may entail hiring additional staff members who can develop systems for analyzing longitudinal data or manage large-scale evaluations of programs and policies. Additionally, many colleges also invest heavily in more sophisticated technology to track students' achievement.

Overall, colleges' investments in upgrading and improving their IR capacity tended to be heavy, with most colleges spending $1 million or more (Table 3.1). Institutional research was a particularly heavy area of investment for Tallahassee, which dedicated approximately $2 million to this work, or 45 percent of its overall investments in institutional reform (Figure 3.1). While other colleges dedicated proportionally fewer resources to this work, most of their investments still hovered around $1 million dollars or more, or 13 percent (Valencia) to 22 percent (El Paso) of their overall reform budgets. Only UNM-Gallup devoted relatively few resources to institutional research, making a $200,000 investment, or 7 percent of its overall Achieving the Dream funds.

Activities Related to Institutional Research

Colleges' spending on institutional research tended to be driven by two key activities: (1) increasing IR staff capacity and data analysis and (2) the purchase of technology. As can be seen in Figure 3.5, the colleges' investments in these two activities varied across the five schools. Most colleges devoted a significant proportion of their IR funds — 60 percent or more — to additional staff hires and data analysis. Tallahassee, in particular, made a high investment in these activities, devoting approximately $1.7 million, or 86 percent, of its IR reform dollars to staffing and data analysis. UNM-Gallup also devoted most of its resources to staffing and data analysis, although its overall investment in these activities (approximately $190,000) was much lower than at the other schools.

Colleges' investments in IR activities tended to revolve around hiring new staff, implementing new data inquiry systems, and conducting evaluations of specific programs or policies. For instance, Box 3.4 discusses how South Texas invested substantial monies in hiring three new institutional researchers, which increased its IR staff capacity by about 40 percent; its new 10-person IR department was able to more skillfully manage the large increase in data requests and implement a system to help faculty and staff more easily access information on

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[2]Although Achieving the Dream encourages faculty, staff, and administrator involvement in data analysis, for clarity the expenses related to their involvement are analyzed above, with the activities related to leadership and management. See "Data Analysis."

Achieving the Dream: Community Colleges Count

Figure 3.5

Institutional Research: Total Expenditures in Key Areas, by College
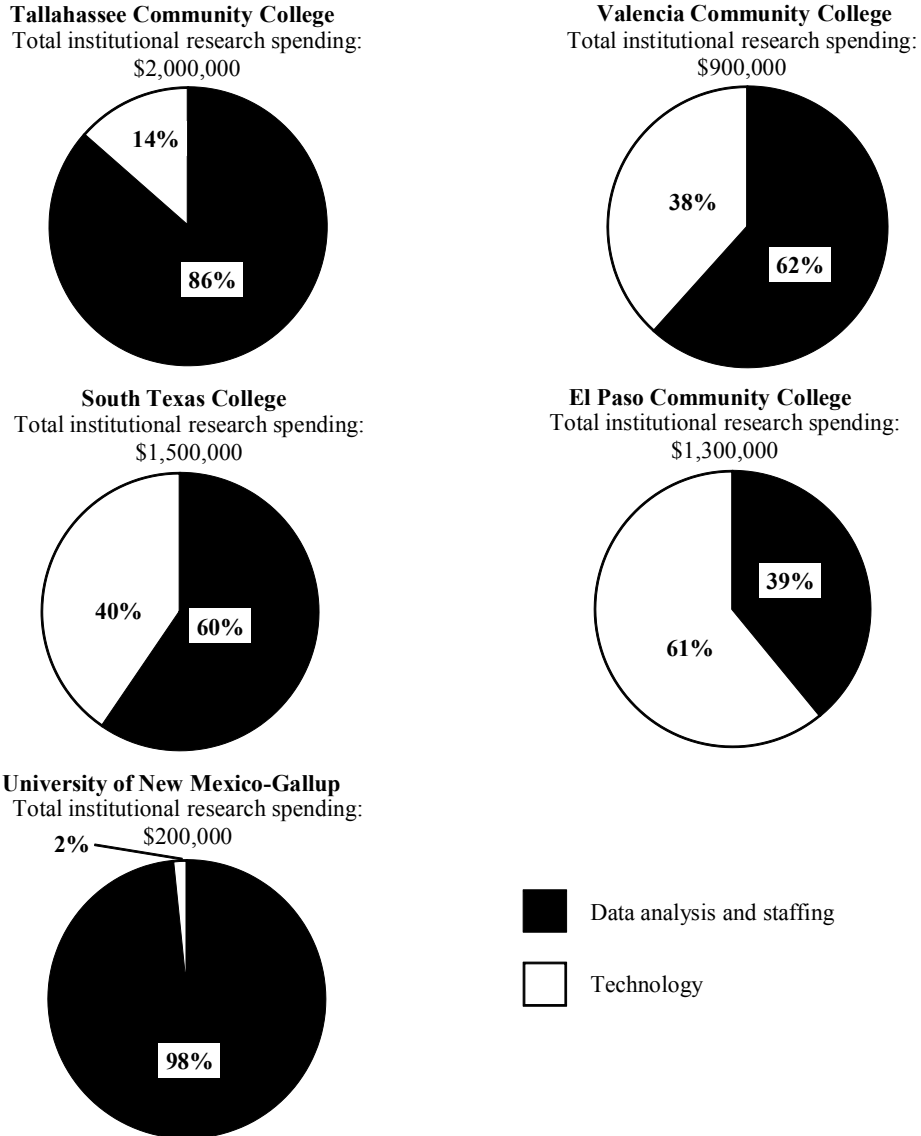
Tallahassee Community College
Total institutional research spending:
$2,000,000

14%

86%

Valencia Community College
Total institutional research spending:
$900,000

38%

62%

South Texas College
Total institutional research spending:
$1,500,000

40%

60%

El Paso Community College
Total institutional research spending:
$1,300,000

39%

61%

University of New Mexico-Gallup
Total institutional research spending:
$200,000

2%

98%

■ Data analysis and staffing

□ Technology

SOURCES: MDRC calculations using data collected from site-visit interviews, Lumina grant ledgers, and other budget documentation collected from each of the colleges.

NOTES: "Data analysis and staffing" includes the costs incurred for items such as the hiring of new staff, consultant fees, and materials and supplies for focus groups. This category also includes the time spent by all institutional research, information technology, and education research staff members on Achieving the Dream activities.

   "Technology" includes purchases of such items as computer software and equipment and license and membership fees.

Box 3.4

Navigating the Path to Improving Institutional Research

A key component of Achieving the Dream is the use of data to inform decision-making. Like many participating schools, the five colleges in this study attempted to accomplish this goal by improving their institutional research (IR) departments. They increased their IR capacity a number of ways, ranging from hiring more staff to training existing staff to purchasing powerful data analysis tools. Their paths were not always easy, however, as is demonstrated in these two cases.

Tallahassee Community College. Tallahassee created a successful data management system after testing a variety of software programs. At the start of Achieving the Dream, the college purchased SAS in order to improve data management. While the new system was more sophisticated, it was also expensive and required a heavy investment in training for staff throughout the college. In 2007, the IR staff reassessed their needs and realized that SAS was too demanding and costly for their purposes. The college then turned to the Microsoft Business Intelligence Suite, a data management system that was already in-house and that allowed the school to create individualized, online portals for students, faculty, staff, and the board of trustees. This provided users with individualized data based on their needs.

South Texas College. When South Texas joined Achieving the Dream, its Office of Institutional Research (OIRE) had seven full-time staff, and the college entered the initiative with a strong data warehouse system that stored clean, quality-controlled student records, by semester. Although OIRE updated data regularly, they were not easily accessible to others at the college. After joining Achieving the Dream, the administration raised the bar for program assessments, and OIRE quickly became overwhelmed by a surge in demand for actionable data. To compensate for these challenges, South Texas hired three new IR staff, divided OIRE into three divisions, and merged its Institutional Technology department into these new divisions, which each have distinct responsibilities for data management:

- Research and Analytical Services handles quantitative and qualitative research.
- Information Management and Reporting manages internal reporting and Dashboards.
- OIRE administers external reporting.

The key lessons for other colleges to consider when investing in institutional research are:

- A strong IR leader can play a critical role in investigating software technologies and managing the process of change.
- Hiring additional staff and diversifying the IR department's capacities may be needed to streamline and manage varying data needs.
- Careful planning of projected data needs and a close examination of resources on hand are warranted to implement successful changes.

student outcomes. Similarly, Valencia had an institutional researcher present on many of the committees leading reforms, such as its revised mentoring program and its developmental education review committee. These researchers were generally responsible for tracking students' outcomes and helping monitor programs' success at increasing students' achievement.

While most colleges invested heavily in staffing and data analysis, several schools also devoted substantial resources to technology purchases. Investments in technology, software, and equipment were particularly high at El Paso, where these purchases accounted for 61 percent, or approximately $800,000, of overall IR investments. Technology and equipment also made up a consistent area of spending at South Texas (approximately $600,000) and Valencia (approximately $360,000), with both colleges contributing nearly 40 percent of their IR funding to upgrading their data management systems. Only UNM-Gallup spent less than 5 percent of its institutional reform monies on technology purchases, with an investment of less than $5,000.

Most colleges' technology expenditures centered on purchases of new data management systems. El Paso, Valencia, and Tallahassee purchased SAS, a sophisticated database used to undertake quantitative analyses of student outcomes (Box 3.4). South Texas invested in a "data warehouse" system that tracked students' achievement across a multitude of indicators, allowing for more detailed investigations of students' success. Finally, South Texas and Valencia invested in data "dashboards" or "portals" — systems to facilitate getting data out to faculty and staff, to summarize students' performance on relevant indicators in an engaging, easily understood format.

While many colleges invested heavily in increasing their IR capacity, their expenditures did not always result in the best system for the colleges' work. For instance, Tallahassee had the highest overall investments in institutional research (approximately $2 million); however, some of its initial investments were reversed when the college realized that it had purchased a system that did not match its own needs for internal data (Box 3.4). Therefore, while colleges may spend large sums accessing more sophisticated data systems, such purchases are not always needed to manage a college's increased data needs.

Finally, examining the overall patterns in colleges' spending on institutional research reveals that the schools in this study tended to support IR reforms with internal funds, either by reallocating employee time or through flexible institutional funds (Appendix Figure B.2). Figure 3.6 shows that the colleges began with small investments that increased steadily over the course of participation in Achieving the Dream. On average, colleges spent minimal funds (2 percent) during their planning year in the initiative and dedicated the bulk of their investments (83 percent) during the final three years of their participation. Much of this spending was due to the ramp-up in colleges' evaluations (Tallahassee and South Texas), new staff hires (South

Achieving the Dream: Community Colleges Count

Figure 3.6

Institutional Research: Average Expenditures, by Year
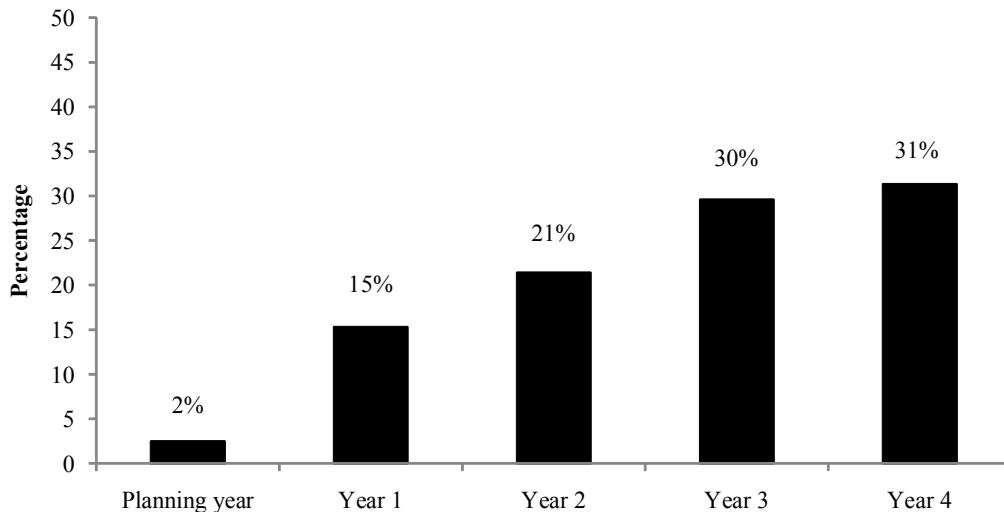
SOURCES: MDRC calculations using data collected from site-visit interviews, Lumina grant ledgers, and other budget documentation collected from each of the colleges.

NOTES: The planning year represents Fiscal Year 2005 and academic year 2004-2005. Year 1 represents Fiscal Year 2006 and academic year 2005-2006. Year 2 represents Fiscal Year 2007 and academic year 2006-2007. Year 3 is Fiscal Year 2008 and academic year 2007-2008. Year 4 is Fiscal Year 2009 and academic year 2008-2009.

   MDRC combined the expenditures by year at each of the five colleges in order to show an overall average for spending by year.

Texas), and the implementation of technological programs, such as SAS (El Paso, Tallahassee, and Valencia) and the building of a data warehouse and data dashboards (South Texas).

Investments in Intervention Strategies

After colleges gather a core group of leaders and identify their priorities for reform, Achieving the Dream expects them to begin translating their energy into action by developing and implementing new programs and policies aimed at increasing students' success. These interventions can range from modest changes in course curricula to such ambitious endeavors as implementing new courses or advising programs. In general, the initiative recommends that a college begin with pilot studies of a limited number of intervention strategies, which the college then evaluates to monitor their success at improving students' achievement. If any strategies prove effective, colleges are then encouraged to scale up those interventions to reach larger

proportions of students. If strategies prove unsuccessful at improving students' outcomes, colleges are expected to modify or discontinue them.

Resources Devoted to Colleges' Strategies

A third key area of investment for the colleges in this study, then, is the development and implementation of intervention strategies to increase students' success. The colleges tended to devote a large number of resources to this area (Figure 3.1).[3] With the exception of Tallahassee, all the colleges spent 30 percent or more of their institutional reform resources on intervention strategies. UNM-Gallup, El Paso, and South Texas dedicated particularly high proportions — 50 percent or more of their overall resources — to their success strategies. South Texas had the highest overall contribution ($5.8 million) while each of the others topped $2 million or more in implementing their strategies. Tallahassee was the only school that contributed less than $1 million to these efforts, due in part to its focus on improving the IR department (Box 3.4).

Activities Related to Colleges' Strategies

Large proportions of the colleges' investments in strategies were based on faculty and staff involvement in establishing these interventions. As can be seen in Figure 3.7, the faculty and staff at each college accounted for the majority of the college's investments in this work. These personnel tended to be heavily involved with the development, management, and leadership of new interventions, with administrators playing a relatively minor role in the process. Only at El Paso, where administrators were more heavily tasked with leading their Achieving the Dream work, did their involvement in strategy implementation top 15 percent.

While some colleges hired new faculty, staff, or consultants to help lead their strategies, most of these colleges' investments were supported by reallocated employee time, as colleges shifted faculty and staff time toward developing, implementing, and managing new intervention strategies. Spending of reallocated employee time on strategies at each of the colleges tended to be driven by two key issues. First, the scale-up of several of the colleges' strategies required numerous hours from instructional or student services staff. For instance, South Texas reallocated the staff time of 13 counselors to teach student success courses, accounting for nearly one-

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[3]Some operating costs were excluded from this analysis if they did not relate to the establishment of the intervention or if they were already covered under the college's normal expenses. For example, the design and construction of new buildings were often omitted, as these costly purchases may not be necessary for other colleges' implementation of these interventions. Additionally, certain strategies — such as learning communities or other changes in classroom instruction — do not necessarily require the hiring of new staff or the reallocation of employee time, as these classes are already covered in the current budget. Therefore, instruction time for these reforms was not included in this analysis unless colleges explicitly mentioned developing new classes or providing additional instruction time over and above their traditional offerings.

Achieving the Dream: Community Colleges Count

Figure 3.7

Strategies: Total Expenditures, by Level of Employee and College
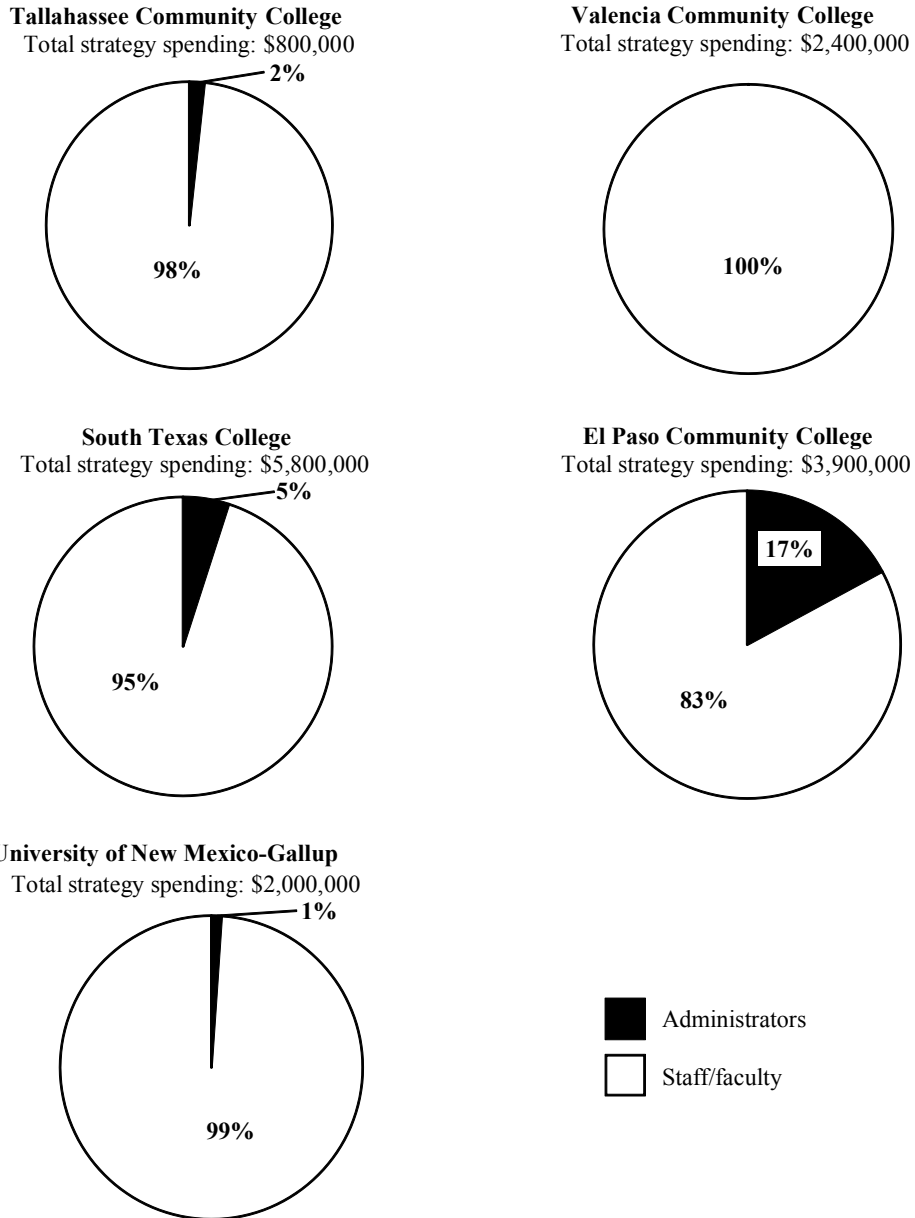
Tallahassee Community College
Total strategy spending: $800,000

2%

98%

Valencia Community College
Total strategy spending: $2,400,000

100%

South Texas College
Total strategy spending: $5,800,000

5%

95%

El Paso Community College
Total strategy spending: $3,900,000

17%

83%

University of New Mexico-Gallup
Total strategy spending: $2,000,000

1%

99%

■ Administrators

□ Staff/faculty

SOURCES: MDRC calculations using data collected from site-visit interviews, Lumina grant ledgers, and other budget documentation collected from each of the colleges.

NOTE: Each category or level of employee shown on the pie charts includes costs associated with the reallocation of time as well as hard costs incurred at that level of employment (such as new hires, stipends, and consultant fees).

half of its overall employee-time expenditures. Similarly, Valencia reallocated the time of 100 adjunct faculty to lead the expansion of its student success courses, which were devoted to helping students learn how to navigate their college careers. Second, colleges' costs were driven by their choice to devote one or two key staff members to manage an intervention, often resulting in a large number of hours for a select group of individuals. For instance, approximately $50,000 of UNM-Gallup's strategy costs are related to one person's management of its dual enrollment program, while El Paso's director of early college high schools made up approximately 20 percent of the college's employee-time expenditures.

While all the colleges utilized employee time to fund strategy development, most of them also depended heavily on other resources to implement these programs and reforms (Appendix Figure B.3). External grants were particularly important for UNM-Gallup, which used them to fund nearly three-quarters of its strategy development. Virtually all these resources came from a Title III grant, and UNM-Gallup used most of these funds to hire additional staff for its newly created Transitional Studies department for students taking developmental courses. While on a much smaller scale, external grants were also important for several other colleges' strategy development. For instance, South Texas funded nearly 20 percent of its strategy work through the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) Carl Perkins Grant, which was used to hire new retention specialists. Similarly, El Paso used external grants from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, the Greater Texas Foundation, and the State of Texas Education Agency to implement its Early College High Schools, and it used funding from THECB to aid in the operation of its Summer Bridge programs. Therefore, while colleges used reallocated employee time, several also depended on external grants to help fund this work — particularly the smaller college in this study. (Box 2.1 in Chapter 2 describes the external funds that each college used while participating in Achieving the Dream.)

Much as Achieving the Dream has recommended for the scale-up of interventions, the colleges in this study invested the most on their strategies during the last three years of participation in the initiative. Figure 3.8 show that, on average, colleges expended 91 percent of their strategy-related resources during Years 2 through 4 of implementation. This pattern of expenditures suggests that colleges did take the first two years in Achieving the Dream to plan and pilot their strategies, only to expand their efforts during the final years of implementation.

Summary

The strength, pattern, and timeline of these colleges' investments in their Achieving the Dream reforms clearly demonstrate that the colleges took the charge of the initiative seriously. While their investments varied, each of them invested heavily in the leadership and management of their reforms, in upgrading their IR capacity, and in developing their intervention strategies. Among the key drivers of colleges' costs were their investments in faculty and staff,

Achieving the Dream: Community Colleges Count

Figure 3.8

Strategies: Average Expenditures, by Year
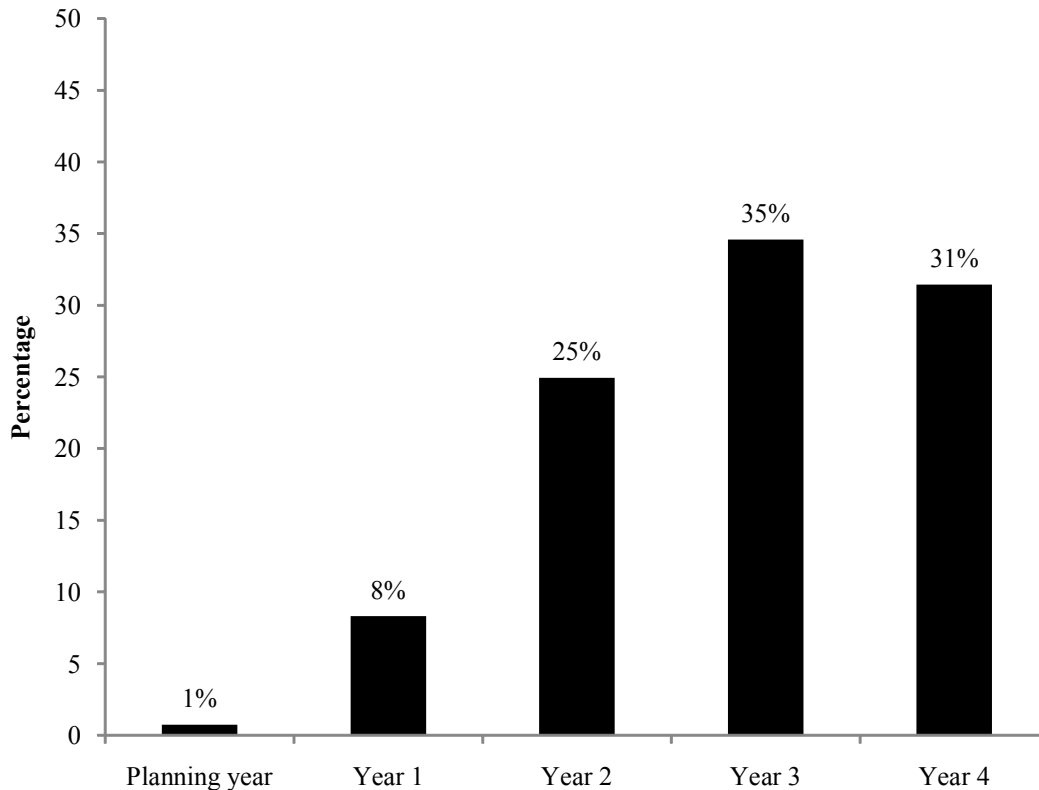
SOURCES: MDRC calculations using data collected from site-visit interviews, Lumina grant ledgers, and other budget documentation collected from each of the colleges.

NOTE: The planning year represents Fiscal Year 2005 and academic year 2004-2005. Year 1 represents Fiscal Year 2006 and academic year 2005-2006. Year 2 represents Fiscal Year 2007 and academic year 2006-2007. Year 3 is Fiscal Year 2008 and academic year 2007-2008. Year 4 is Fiscal Year 2009 and academic year 2008-2009.
    MDRC combined the expenditures by year at each of the five colleges in order to show an overall average for spending by year.

ranging from their leadership of particular reform strategies to their professional development. These expenditures reveal that many of the colleges also heavily involved faculty and staff in their reform process, thus following Achieving the Dream's recommendation to engage the larger college community. As is discussed in Chapter 4, these colleges' expenditures provide important lessons for colleges that are interested in pursuing a similar reform process as well as for funders that may wish to support their work.

Chapter 4

Learning from the Achieving the Dream Model: Key Lessons from Colleges' Investments in Institutional Reform

As community colleges move forward into the twenty-first century, they face an ever-changing landscape of institutional policy and practice. State and local governments, as well as foundations, are increasingly turning an eye on community colleges' work, and such attention brings both opportunities and challenges for these schools. One of the most important modifications that policymakers and funders have made in recent years has been their progressively more vocal calls for improved student achievement. Such appeals create substantial challenges for community colleges, as they represent a detour from the traditional focus on access and enrollments. Therefore, as colleges work to embrace this new agenda, they must also face critical decisions about how to invest their resources to produce the most effective change.

Achieving the Dream: Community Colleges Count provides a comprehensive model for colleges interested in investing in improved student outcomes. Started in 2003 by Lumina Foundation for Education, Achieving the Dream encourages colleges to undertake a rigorous process of self-examination and to develop concrete goals and priorities for institutional reform based on an analysis of their student outcomes data. In an effort to assist colleges in accomplishing these goals, Achieving the Dream provides a number of supports, including coaching, annual initiativewide conferences, and grants totaling $450,000 over five years. However, colleges are also expected to find other sources of funding — either from external grants or their own institutional funds — to pilot and implement successful institutional reform strategies.

This study is examining the costs of implementing a schoolwide reform agenda at five colleges: Valencia Community College in Orlando, Florida; Tallahassee Community College in Tallahassee, Florida; South Texas College in McAllen, Texas; El Paso Community College in El Paso, Texas; and the University of New Mexico Gallup in Gallup, New Mexico (UNM-Gallup). When drawing from the experiences of these five colleges, it is clear that institutions implementing a large-scale institutional improvement process dedicate substantial resources in actualizing their commitment to increasing students' success. Fortunately, these colleges' investments in institutional reform did not always represent the outlay of hard cash, as many schools were able to undertake this work by shifting employee time rather than hiring new personnel. In many cases, colleges chose to revamp an older committee or change an existing program or policy, thus requiring little additional employee time or other funds to support these efforts. Thus, while colleges may have invested much in their Achieving the Dream work, it

appears that the initiative may have helped them further channel their existent resources into new programmatic and policy decisions.

In reflecting on these colleges' experiences, this final chapter considers what lessons can be learned from their investments. Particular attention is paid to lessons for colleges inaugurating such reforms and to lessons for funders who wish to support schools in these endeavors. In an effort to help the initiative in its own organizational improvement process, recommendations are also given for Achieving the Dream itself. The chapter concludes with recommendations for funding institutional reform.

Lessons for Colleges

- **Carefully consider the deployment of current faculty and staff.**

With the colleges' average spending on Achieving the Dream totaling $6.3 million, it seems clear that substantial resources are needed to establish an institutional reform agenda oriented toward students' success. While the investments are hefty at first glance, the colleges were able to fund 56 percent of their Achieving the Dream activities by reallocating staff time. Using reallocated employee time may help colleges more easily establish their reforms, as it allows for a flexibility rarely possible with outlays of hard cash. Therefore, colleges may want to see whether some portion of existing employee time can be deployed to support their improvement agenda.

- **Prioritize areas for new investment, and identify funding sources to cover these expenses.**

While the colleges in this study were able to support much of their work by reallocating employee time, many of the large-scale investments they made — such as purchasing new data management software or investing in new student success programs — required the outlay of hard cash. Most of the colleges used their own discretionary institutional funds to support these expenses, with internal funds making up approximately 17 percent of their resources, on average. Thus, colleges that are thinking about implementing new activities that cannot be supported solely by existing staff may want to investigate the fungibility of their internal funds and explore how these monies can be used to sustain the costs of new reforms.

External resources can also play an important role in supporting multiple aspects of colleges' improvement agenda. On average, the colleges in this study used $780,000 in external grants, or 18 percent of their institutional reform budgets, to support their Achieving the Dream work. Colleges' external funding came from a variety of sources, including the federal government, state agencies, and private foundations. Given funders' increasing push for improved

community college outcomes, colleges will be well served to consider how programs supported by external funds can be melded with their larger institutional reform process.

- **Involve faculty and staff in planning and implementing the reforms.**

While Achieving the Dream places a high priority on administrators' leadership, faculty and staff involvement in the college's improvement agenda was very important for the colleges in this study. Faculty and staff tended to be heavily involved in committee work, professional development, and strategy implementation, and these activities tended to be key cost drivers for each of the colleges in this study. On average, colleges spent $2.8 million on the involvement of these employees in strategy development, and they spent approximately $1.2 million on their committee work and professional development. Investments in faculty and staff were particularly high at colleges that broadly engaged them, such as South Texas and Valencia.

Given that colleges' leadership and management expenses were relatively stable throughout their five-year participation in Achieving the Dream, colleges may need to plan quickly for how they will support faculty and staff involvement in the colleges' reform agenda and their professional development. Faculty and staff leadership can greatly benefit colleges' work, as their expertise in instruction, planning, and support can help colleges develop strategies and interventions that are sound and well thought out.

- **Plan to invest in institutional research (IR) staff and data systems.**

Nearly all the colleges in this study made significant investments in hiring new IR staff and purchasing new data management technologies to improve their monitoring of students' achievement. This was true even among colleges that already had strong data systems. While other activities can be supported through existing staff resources, these two reforms appear to require hard-dollar investments. Given that IR costs increased incrementally throughout these colleges' five years of participation in Achieving the Dream, other colleges may have some time to plan when and where to invest these monies. Such forethought should be undertaken seriously, with careful consideration being given to the complexities and costs associated with new technologies, as some colleges in this study found that additional planning may have saved them from some unnecessary expenditures.

- **Reserve substantial funds for the development of intervention strategies, and plan for the need to sustain and scale up successful interventions after grant funding ends.**

These colleges spent heavily on their intervention strategies, revealing that such reforms may be among the most expensive investments that colleges make in an institutional reform process. While several colleges were able to fund this work primarily through existing employee time, strategy development proved to be one area where all the colleges depended more

heavily on their flexible institutional funds and external grants. On average, colleges used approximately $840,000 provided by their Lumina Foundation grants and other external sources to support the development of student success programs. For instance, El Paso Community College used a portion of its Lumina grant to pilot a Summer Bridge program in 2007, and then it garnered state funding for the program in 2008.

However, while this seed money was important for colleges to begin piloting their programs, colleges should plan carefully for how they will scale up and sustain their programs after such funding ends. Careful planning from the start may allow colleges to further develop those reforms that prove effective at increasing students' success.

- **Develop efficient mechanisms for supporting high-cost activities, such as professional development and technology purchases, to avoid over-spending budgets.**

The colleges in this study often expended substantial funds on a few key activities or services, which may or may not have served their interests. For instance, Tallahassee's initial investment in a new data management system proved less effective than its own internal system, resulting in numerous expenditures that could have been eliminated. However, some colleges' investments allowed them to develop more efficient systems for promoting their reforms, such as the on-site centers for professional development at Valencia and Tallahassee. Additionally, Valencia tapped into its own internal resources when developing a number of student focus groups rather than outsourcing such tasks. This careful planning allowed these colleges to identify their key big-ticket expenses and develop multiple ways to support these costs.

Lessons for Funders

Lumina Foundation made a brave and bold move by investing in community colleges' improvement and success. In 2003, this was an action that no other national funder had taken. Perhaps one of the most welcoming messages for Lumina and other funders is how much colleges leveraged as a result of their investment. As revealed in Chapter 3, the colleges in this study tended to draw strong support from funds outside their Lumina grants, including their own institutional resources as well other external grants. These trends reveal how much can be gained from a relatively small investment in colleges' institutional reform process — as well as how resourceful colleges can be in reallocating and raising additional funds.

That said, many colleges also found that external funding provided key supports for their work. This is particularly true for UNM-Gallup, the smallest college in this study, as it tended to draw widely from its external grants to support a variety of activities and reforms.

Given these findings, funders might consider the following ways to target their important resources.

- **Flexible, multiyear grants are essential in helping community colleges initiate broad institutional change.**

Lumina provided a highly unusual and rich opportunity for community college reform: a series of grants over the course of five years to support colleges' institutional change. This unique situation provided critical seed money for colleges to plan, develop, and implement a broad reform agenda. Indeed, this seed money helped to catalyze spending that otherwise might not have occurred. Such grants provide important flexibility that helped the colleges in this study plan their efforts and leverage other funds to support their work.

- **Large institutions may have a greater capacity to undertake the process envisioned by Achieving the Dream and to leverage other funding, but smaller institutions may have a greater need for an infusion of cash.**

While the larger colleges were able to depend on their discretionary funds to support some of their institutional reforms, a college like UNM-Gallup had few such supports, in part due to its small size and rural location. Thus, outside funds may be particularly important for small schools that have few other resources to support wide-scale reforms. Foundations and other agencies may wish to consider providing larger grants to colleges that are needier or that have few institutional funds to support their work. While a $450,000 grant may prove to be a small amount of seed money for a larger institution located in a more affluent area, a grant of this size can be a substantial boon for resource-poor institutions.

- **Contemplate the timing of targeted funding: Smaller planning grants early on, followed later by implementation grants, are an effective means of supporting colleges' reforms.**

Funders would be well served to consider the timing of their funding, as the colleges in this study invested differing amounts depending on where they were in their reform process. During the first two years of the initiative, these colleges tended to allocate a modest amount of funds to plan their student success agenda and pilot their interventions. Then, in the final three years of Achieving the Dream, the colleges used significant funds to scale up successful interventions and institutionalize their reforms. Thus, Lumina's staged-funding model, which provided a planning grant followed by a series of implementation funds, may provide the best means of helping colleges implement and sustain their new reforms. Given the temporary nature of these grants, however, funders may also want to help colleges consider how they will sustain their changes over time.

- **Link with other foundations or government agencies to provide more broad-based support for institutional reform.**

While small investments are important, colleges appear to need resources that are much more broadly based when developing and scaling up some of their institutional reforms. Given that one foundation or funder may be unable to provide such wide-scale support, funders might consider linking their resources with other foundations and grant-makers to provide coordinated support for colleges' endeavors. For example, regional or community foundations might link with corporate foundations to support different aspects of a reform agenda. Additionally, if federal interest in community colleges continues and funding measures are implemented, opportunities may exist for foundations to partner with government funders. Such coordinated efforts could allow funders to support specific college reforms while also helping forward these schools' overall efforts to improve student success.

Lessons for Achieving the Dream

Achieving the Dream is now entering a new phase in its development, where it is seeking to expand more rapidly to colleges throughout the United States. As the initiative has embarked on this new strategy, certain elements of the Achieving the Dream model (Chapter 1, Figure 1.1) have been adjusted in order to accommodate colleges' and funders' more limited resources. One change that is particularly pertinent for colleges' reform process is Achieving the Dream's move toward a two-year rather than a five-year participation requirement. While the initiative hopes that colleges will participate longer than two years, its leaders also recognize the challenges that some colleges may face in financially supporting their longer-term tenure in Achieving the Dream. Therefore, some colleges may actually participate in the initiative for fewer years than in the past.

Given the findings from this study, colleges that participate in Achieving the Dream for only two years will likely spend significantly less on their reform process. As noted above, most of the colleges in this study spent very little in the first two years, and most of their expenditures occurred during the final three years of the implementation period. Given this, Achieving the Dream may wish to consider how it mentors colleges in making institutional improvements and to reflect on how schools may invest differently in such work. It would be useful for the initiative to help colleges plan for how they will finance the scale-up and institutionalization of new programs and practices, should they be unable to continue in the initiative beyond two years. Given that they are likely to have just begun their work after two years, such planning and advice would help ensure that colleges bring their Achieving the Dream work to fruition.

Final Considerations for Funding Institutional Reform

While the colleges in this study varied considerably in their spending, several reforms did tend to drive their overall costs: the implementation of intervention strategies, improvements in institutional research capacity, participation in institutional committees, and professional development activities. These expenses reveal that the colleges took seriously many of Achieving the Dream's recommended improvements, including an analysis of student outcomes data, the development of reforms to improve students' achievement, and involving faculty and staff in the institutional improvement process. In addition, however, the investments reveal that the central tenets of the initiative's reform process are also consistent drivers of colleges' overall expenses. Such patterns illustrate that while Achieving the Dream's model for institutional improvement may resonate with community colleges, it also requires them to have substantial resources on hand to undertake such reforms.

While many of these colleges were able to fund a majority of their Achieving the Dream efforts using internal funds, schools participating in the initiative must also carefully consider how to balance these expenses with their existing commitments and priorities. Given that these colleges made substantial investments in their institutional reforms, Achieving the Dream could better serve schools by helping them consider concrete ways to manage and allocate their resources toward funding a large-scale reform process. For instance, the initiative could hire a financial planner or other financial adviser to provide advice and support as colleges enter the initiative and begin planning their work. Such a consultant might help colleges take a longer-term view of their expenses and resources and plan more carefully for a staged rollout of their reforms. Concrete advice would go far in helping community college presidents sift through the myriad financial obligations and priorities on their plate. The recommendations in this report provide the first steps toward this goal. The next step is helping colleges harness their financial resources to create sustainable change that will last over time.

Appendix A

Achieving the Dream's Criteria for Practice

The following set of practices reflects the four core principles of Achieving the Dream's evidence-driven model for increasing student success through institutional improvement.

Principle 1 – Committed Leadership

1.1)   Vision and values

a. President/chancellor and leadership team actively support efforts to improve student learning and completion, not just increase enrollments.
b. President/chancellor and other senior leaders make an explicit policy commitment to improve performance for all students and achieve equity in student outcomes across racial/ethnic and income groups. This policy is communicated to faculty, staff, students and the community.
c. Institutional communications, including news releases, the college's website, appropriate print publications, etc. address the student success agenda.

1.2)   Commitment

a. College's board expects, and the president/chancellor provides, regular reports on student outcomes and the impact of institutional efforts to improve student rates across all student groups.
b. Senior leaders demonstrate willingness to support changes in policies, procedures, and resource allocation to improve student success.
c. Faculty leaders actively support a culture of inquiry and evidence and a broad-based student success agenda.

Principle 2 – Use of Evidence to Improve Policies, Programs, and Services

2.1)   Information Technology (IT) and Institutional Research (IR) capacity

a. IT capacity is adequate to meet the demand for data and institutional research.
b. Policies and procedures are in place to ensure the integrity of the data collected.
c. IR staff capacity is adequate to meet demand for data analysis and research.
d. IR staff effectively educates and assists college personnel to use data and research to improve programs and services.

2.2)   Process for identifying achievement gaps

a. College routinely collects, analyzes, and reports longitudinal data on cohorts of students to track student progression and outcomes.
b. College routinely disaggregates student cohort data by age, race, gender, income, and other factors to identify gaps in achievement among student groups.
c. College regularly conducts surveys and focus groups with students, faculty, and staff to identify strengths and weaknesses in programs and services, as well as opportunities for improvement.

2.3) **Process for formulating and evaluating solutions**

    a. College routinely engages faculty, staff, and others across the campus community to review data on student achievement and help develop and refine strategies for addressing priority problems.

    b. College routinely evaluates the effectiveness of efforts to improve student success and uses the results to improve policy and practice.

Principle 3 – Broad Engagement

3.1) **Faculty and staff**

    a. Faculty meets regularly to examine course and program outcomes and develop strategies for addressing achievement gaps and student success.

    b. Faculty routinely assesses academic programs and teaching strategies from the perspective of current research on effective practice.

    c. Part-time or adjunct faculty is actively engaged in institutional efforts to improve student success.

    d. Student services staff routinely assesses student success strategies from the perspective of current research on effective practice.

    e. There is alignment and extensive collaboration on efforts to improve student success between academic/institutional units and student services.

3.2) **Students and external stakeholders**

    a. College secures active student participation in efforts to improve student outcomes.

    b. College secures input from external stakeholders to identify causes of achievement gaps and inform the development of strategies for improving student success.

Principle 4 – Systemic Institutional Improvement

4.1) Institutional management

a. College has established a strategic planning process that relies on data to set goals for student success and to measure goal attainment.

b. Plans for a given year are driven by a limited set of strategic priorities that have a focus on student success

c. College regularly evaluates its academic programs and student services to determine how well they promote student success and how they can be improved.

d. Decisions about budget allocations are based on evidence of program effectiveness and linked to plans to increase student success rates.

e. College uses external grant funds to strategically support systemic efforts to improve outcomes for students broadly, not just for isolated projects that benefit small numbers of students.

f. College actively works to enlarge and sustain pilot programs or practices that prove effective.

g. Student success agenda is integrated with ongoing accreditation activity, reviews, and self-study.

4.2) Organization

a. College has a standing committee or committees responsible for guiding and monitoring efforts to improve student outcomes.

b. Major meetings, organizational units, and work groups regularly focus on the student success agenda.

4.3) Professional development

a. College offers faculty and staff professional development that reinforces efforts to improve student success and close achievement gaps.

b. College's induction and orientation activities for new faculty and staff, including adjunct and contingent faculty, foster a commitment to student success.

c. College provides training to faculty and staff on using data and research to improve programs and services.

Appendix B

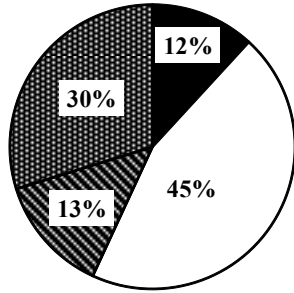# Supplementary Exhibits for Chapter 3

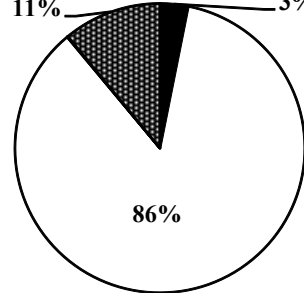**Achieving the Dream: Community Colleges Count**

Appendix Figure B.1

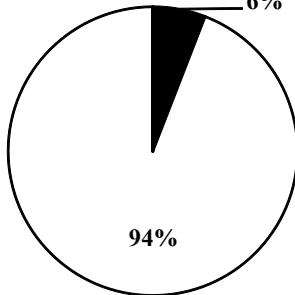**Leadership and Management: Distribution of Resource Expenditures**

Tallahassee Community College
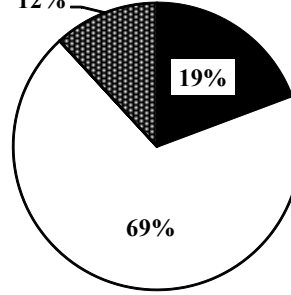Total leadership and management spending:
$1,700,000

Valencia Community College
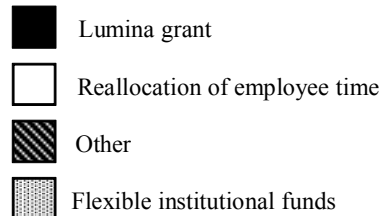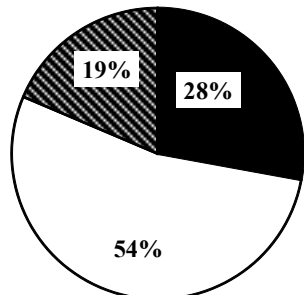Total leadership and management spending:
$4,000,000

12%
30%
13%
45%

11%
3%
86%

South Texas College
Total leadership and management spending:
$3,500,000

6%
94%

El Paso Community College
Total leadership and management spending:
$900,000

12%
19%
69%

University of New Mexico-Gallup
Total leadership and management spending:
$700,000

19%
28%
54%

■ Lumina grant

□ Reallocation of employee time

▨ Other

▧ Flexible institutional funds

SOURCES: MDRC calculations using data collected from site-visit interviews, Lumina grant ledgers, and other budget documentation collected from each of the colleges.

NOTES: "Flexible institutional funds" include college's general funds that were reallocated to fund Achieving the Dream activities.

Appendix Table B.1

**Expenditures on Key Leadership and Management, Institutional Research,
and Strategy Activities, by Level of Employee and College**

Outcome ($)	Tallahassee Community College	Valencia Community College	South Texas College	El Paso Community College	University of New Mexico-Gallup
Leadership and management					
Committees (total)	310,246	2,519,251	2,524,183	475,595	436,377
Administrators	109,411	905,687	993,367	150,718	264,378
Staff/faculty	200,834	1,613,565	1,530,816	324,878	172,000
Data analysis (total)	74,198	299,771	97,409	72,892	32,745
Administrators	19,694	231,367	20,354	35,204	16,346
Staff/faculty	54,504	68,405	77,055	37,687	16,399
Professional development (total)	982,842	1,138,732	643,376	337,921	209,465
Administrators	91,730	114,019	245,783	118,080	100,690
Staff/faculty	649,661	1,010,471	393,334	124,413	108,775
IR staff	241,451	14,243	4,258	95,427	0
External engagement (total)	287,179	76,284	273,406	16,245	37,711
Adminstrators	215,489	8,134	7,133	10,868	4,833
Staff/faculty	71,689	68,150	266,274	5,377	32,878
Institutional research					
Institutional research, information technology, or educational research staff	1,722,067	580,021	906,632	517,627	188,699
Strategies					
Strategies (total)	811,873	2,364,821	5,754,098	3,891,901	2,022,145
Administrators	13,818	2,300	285,867	666,337	21,713
Staff/faculty	798,055	2,362,521	5,468,231	3,225,564	2,000,433

SOURCES: MDRC calculations using data collected from site-visit interviews, Lumina grant ledgers, and other budget documentation collected from each of the colleges.
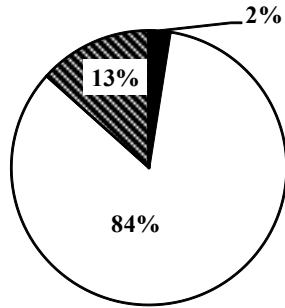
NOTE: Each category or level of employee shown includes costs associated with the reallocation of time as well as hard costs incurred at that level of employment (such as trainings, travel, conference fees, meeting materials and supplies, and new hires).

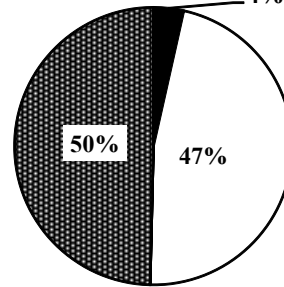**Achieving the Dream: Community Colleges Count**

Appendix Figure B.2

Institutional Research: Distribution of Resource Expenditures
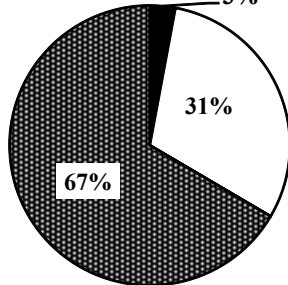
Tallahassee Community College
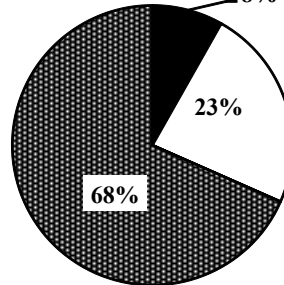Total institutional research spending: $2,000,000

2%
13%
84%

Valencia Community College
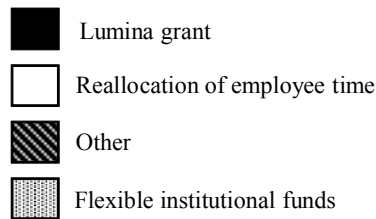Total institutional research spending: $900,000

4%
50%
47%

South Texas College
Total institutional research spending: $1,500,000

3%
31%
67%

El Paso Community College
Total institutional research spending: $1,300,000

8%
23%
68%

University of New Mexico-Gallup
Total institutional research spending: $200,000

8%
13%
79%

◼ Lumina grant

☐ Reallocation of employee time

▨ Other

▧ Flexible institutional funds

SOURCES: MDRC calculations using data collected from site-visit interviews, Lumina grant ledgers, and other budget documentation collected from each of the colleges.

NOTES: "Flexible institutional funds" include college's general funds that were reallocated to fund Achieving the Dream activities.
    "Other" includes federal grants, state grants, and funding received from private funders.

Achieving the Dream: Community Colleges Count

Appendix Figure B.3

Strategies: Distribution of Resource Expenditures

Tallahassee Community College
Total strategies spending:
$800,000

12% — 13%
75%

Valencia Community College
Total strategies spending:
$2,400,000

18% — 13%
69%

South Texas College
Total strategies spending:
$5,800,000

3%
30%
51%
16%

El Paso Community College
Total strategies spending:
$3,900,000

3%
34%
42%
20%

University of New Mexico-Gallup
Total strategies spending:
$2,000,000

11%
16%
73%

■ Lumina grant

□ Reallocation of employee time

▨ Other

▦ Flexible institutional funds

SOURCES: MDRC calculations using data collected from site-visit interviews, Lumina grant ledgers, and other budget documentation collected from each of the colleges.
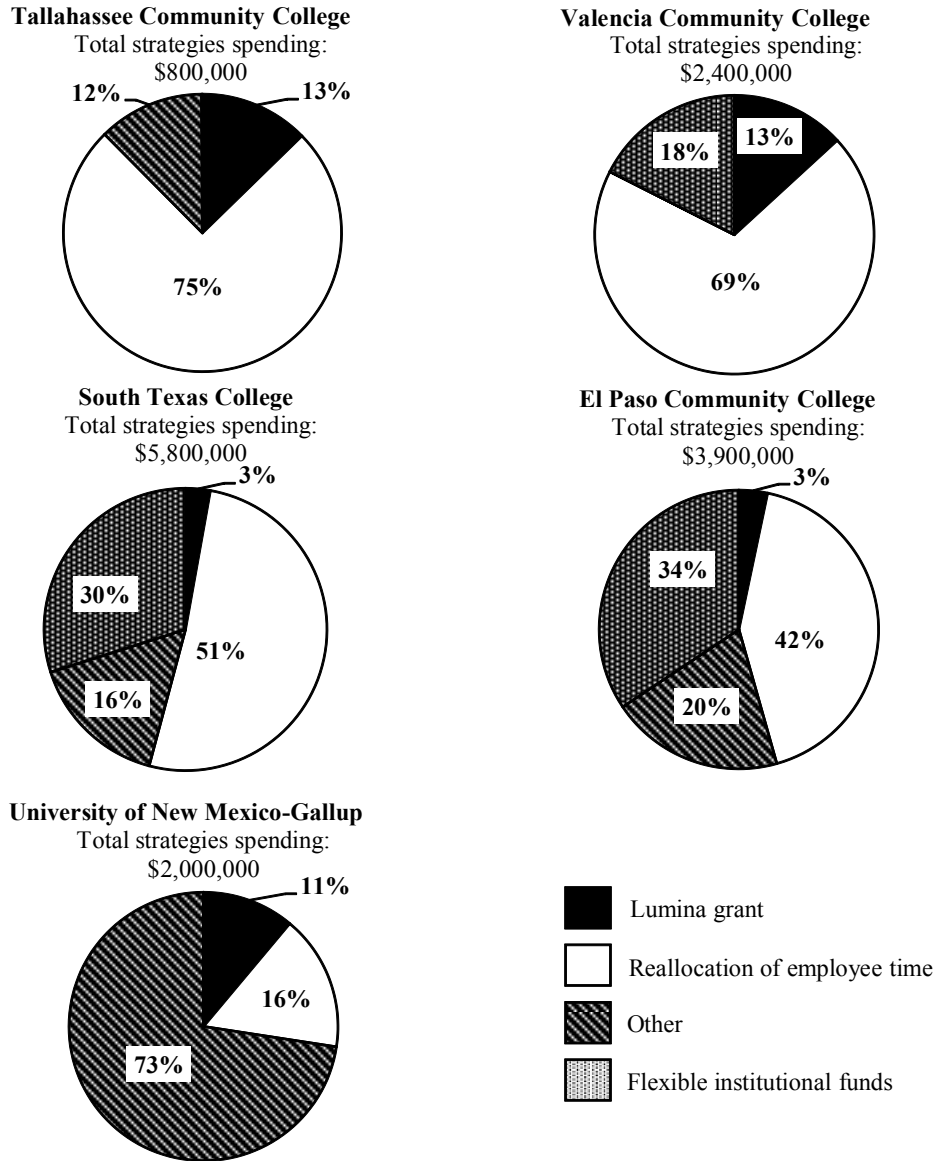
NOTES: "Flexible institutional funds" include college's general funds that were reallocated to fund Achieving the Dream activities.
    "Other" includes federal grants, state grants, and funding received from private funders.

Appendix C

Methodology for Estimating Expenditures

In the event that MDRC was unable to collect expenditure data at the colleges in this study, estimations were made for particular expenditures, either based on the average costs associated with similar activities at other colleges or calculated for missing years by averaging known expenditures in budget documentation for a given activity. In some instances, if new employees were hired as a result of Achieving the Dream, salaries were included in hard-cost estimates. All costs have been adjusted to calendar year 2008 dollars. Appendix Table C.1 presents a list of estimates made at colleges for missing items over $75,000.

Achieving the Dream: Community Colleges Count

Appendix Table C.1

Estimated Expenditures, by College (2008 Dollars)

College	Expenditure	Amount Estimated	Resource Type	Expenditure Category
Tallahassee	Center for Employee Enrichment	$484,741	Institutional funds	Leadership and management
	Title III Grant, 2008-2009	$129,610	Other	Leadership and management, institutional research, and strategies
Valencia	SAS purchase / data warehouse, 2005-2007	$207,780	Institutional funds	Institutional research
	SAS renewal fee 2007-2009	$99,850	Institutional funds	Institutional research
	Student Learning, LinC, Individual Campus Plan	$229,312	Institutional funds	Strategies
	"Comp House" Support Center	$94,950	Institutional funds	Strategies
	Student Activities budget, 2005-2008	$291,651	Institutional funds	Strategies
South Texas	3 new IR staff (salaries, 2006-2009)	$436,337	Institutional funds	Institutional research
	Summer Bridge program	$75,000	Other	Strategies
El Paso	SAS budget, 2007-2008	$311,000	Institutional funds	Institutional research
	Student Success budget, 2006-2007, 2008-2009	$555,711	Institutional funds	Strategies
	ACCUPLACER testing budget	$123,478	Institutional funds	Strategies

SOURCE: MDRC estimates using costs associated with similar activities at other colleges or calculating for missing years by averaging known expenditures in budget documentation for a given activity.

NOTE: Estimates shown are for any missing items that total over $75,000.

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Founded in 1974 and located in New York City and Oakland, California, MDRC is best known for mounting rigorous, large-scale, real-world tests of new and existing policies and programs. Its projects are a mix of demonstrations (field tests of promising new program approaches) and evaluations of ongoing government and community initiatives. MDRC's staff bring an unusual combination of research and organizational experience to their work, providing expertise on the latest in qualitative and quantitative methods and on program design, development, implementation, and management. MDRC seeks to learn not just whether a program is effective but also how and why the program's effects occur. In addition, it tries to place each project's findings in the broader context of related research — in order to build knowledge about what works across the social and education policy fields. MDRC's findings, lessons, and best practices are proactively shared with a broad audience in the policy and practitioner community as well as with the general public and the media.

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- Improving Public Education
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- Supporting Low-Wage Workers and Communities
- Overcoming Barriers to Employment

Working in almost every state, all of the nation's largest cities, and Canada and the United Kingdom, MDRC conducts its projects in partnership with national, state, and local governments, public school systems, community organizations, and numerous private philanthropies.