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Office of Research and Planning

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### Why the Data Matters Newsletter?

Ever heard of “the perfect storm?” If so (or if you saw the movie), you know that a “perfect storm” refers to the simultaneous occurrence of events that if taken individually, would be far less powerful.

The college finds itself in the midst of a “perfect storm.” Events occurring simultaneously include a strategic planning cycle, preparation for continued accreditation, implementation of the *Achieving the Dream* initiative, and governmental mandates for increased higher education accountability and improved student success.

The *Spellings Commission Report* calls for the addressing of non-academic barriers, significant increases in aid to low-income students, and the measurement and reporting of student learning outcomes. This report also recommends that higher education embrace a culture of continuous improvement through innovation and continued quality improvement through the development of new pedagogies, curricula, and technologies.

The bottom line is this—data must be utilized to create a culture of inquiry and evidence to improve student success. This newsletter is one of the tools that will be used to cultivate this data-driven culture.

Although much is collected, college data must be communicated and analyzed in order to drive decision making and resource allocations targeted for improved student success. *Achieving the Dream* and other institutional data and research/planning information will be disseminated in this and subsequent *Data Matters* newsletters. (Get the double meaning of the name? Data matters, i.e. is significant, and data matters, i.e. the data details.)

June Prince  
VP Planning & Assessment

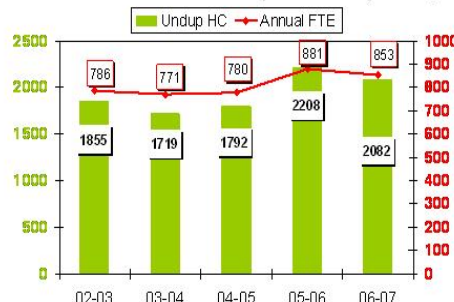


### Credit Enrollment remains stable

Official fall 2007 enrollment is 1,558 students enrolled in 12,348 student semester

credit hours. Comparison to fall 2006 indicates that headcount has decreased slightly (1565 in 2006), but credit hours have increased four percent (11,909 in 2006). The college’s largest enrollment was in fall 2005 with 1,590 students enrolled in 12,391 credit hours.

Unduplicated Headcount/  
Annualized Full-Time Equivalent (SSCH/30)



Enrollment numbers for the 2006-2007 academic year indicate a 6 percent decrease in unduplicated headcount and a 3 percent decreased in annualized full-time equivalent. The accompanying chart outlines the trends of the past five academic years.

**Achieving the Dream Values are:**  
 —student-centered vision  
 —culture of inquiry, evidence, and accountability  
 —equity and excellence

## OTC Joins the Achieving the Dream Initiative

Achieving the Dream: Community Colleges Count is a multi-year national initiative funded by the Lumina Foundation for Education and, in Arkansas, by the Winthrop Rockefeller Foundation. This program provides support (financial and human) to implement strategies designed to help more students—particularly students of color and low-income students—succeed at community colleges.

In June, OTC received word that it was one of four Arkansas community colleges selected through a proposal process to join the initiative. National Park, Pulaski Tech, and Phillips were also chosen. Each institution received a \$50,000 grant for 2007-08 to plan and launch the initiative and will be eligible for implementation grants worth up to \$400,000 over the next four years.

## Achieving the Dream Values and Goals That Guide Institutional Change

As an open-access, community-based, two-year institution of higher education, OTC students have diverse goals. Regardless of those goals (an award and/or transfer credits, career skills), many have substantial hurdles to their college path.

According to U.S. Department of Education data (2003), 70 percent of community college students face at least one, and 50 percent face two or more of the challenges that reduce their chance of completing a college program. Those characteristics include the following:

- delayed enrollment after high school;
- lack of high school diploma;
- part-time enrollment;
- 30 or more hours of work per week;
- financial independence from parents;
- dependents other than a spouse; and
- single parenthood.

### Values

Ultimately, Achieving the Dream (AtD) seeks to help students achieve their individual goals. The initiative is particularly concerned about low-income and students of color,

In addition to institutional strategies to raise student success rates, Achieving the Dream works for positive change at the state and national levels as well. An Arkansas team is currently working to implement supportive policies and partnerships at the state level to help colleges eliminate barriers to student success.

The Achieving the Dream: Community Colleges Count initiative began in 2004 with 27 community colleges in 5 states (Round 1). In 2005 and 2006, 31 institutions and 4 more states were funded (Rounds 2 and 3). In 2007, 24 colleges in 8 states were added as Round 4, bringing the total number to 82 participating institutions in 15 different states. A list of participants, as well as more information on the initiative, is available online at [www.achievingthedream.org](http://www.achievingthedream.org).

groups that have traditionally faced more significant barriers to success.

To achieve higher rates of success for students, AtD is designed to help faculty, staff, and administrators put the following values into practice to guide institutional change.

- student-centered vision—the “north star” that should guide institutional decisions;
- culture of inquiry, evidence and accountability—a data-driven decision-making process;
- equity and excellence—(equity does not mean treating all students the same but to offer each student the support needed to succeed).

### Goals

To gauge the impact of the initiative, OTC will document and track the following student information:

- successful completion of developmental courses and progression to college-level courses;

*(continued at top of page 3—Values & Goals)*

(continued from page 2—Values and Goals)

- enroll in and successfully complete college-level “gatekeeper” courses (College Algebra and Comp I);
- complete courses attempted with a C or higher;
- re-enroll from one semester to the next;
- earn certificates and degrees;
- transfer (an OTC goal).

### Principles

The following principles guide the process of institutional change through the Achieving the Dream initiative:

1. Long-term impact requires change in systems as opposed to add-on programs or projects; successful innovations should be

integrated into strategic plans and budgets to ensure sustainability and long-term impact.

2. Strategies must be appropriate to the college’s circumstances and to the students’ needs.
3. Broad-based participation is essential.
4. Inside and outside voices must be heard.
5. Institutional change is both technical and adaptive. (Technical involves applying strategies to problems; adaptive shifts college priorities, culture, or values to bring policies and practices into closer alignment with goals.)



### Achieving the Dream Examines Student Data

As indicated in the page 1 article, *Why the Data Matters Newsletter*, strategies implemented through the Achieving the Dream (AtD) initiative will be developed as the result of examining student data. In order to do this, data is analyzed by student groups or cohorts that consist of full- and part-time fall semester, award-seeking, first-time OTC students (first-time entering and transfer).

Two types of student data files are prepared—a general record submitted once per cohort and a term record submitted for fall, spring, summer 1 & 2, and summer 3 semesters.

The general record contains student-specific data that need to be collected only once: i.e., student demographics, high school information, application data, etc. The term record contains data reflecting student’s activities for the reporting term: grade-point average, credits attempted, credits earned, developmental course activity, etc. The term record will include all cohorts in one file.

JBL Associates, Inc., (JBLA) is coordinating the data collection for the AtD initiative. Thus

far, data submitted include fall 2004, 2005, and 2006 cohorts and terms files for academic years 2004-05, 2005-06, and 2006-07. The College will add to and continue to track cohorts over a period of time to conduct a longitudinal student.

The initiative also collects these data from other AtD colleges into one database to allow for the analysis. JBL provides tools to allow OTC to analyze students’ progress, to examine trends, and to compare this to trends at all AtD participants. Through JBLA’s eStats software, these comparisons will be made. The first of these data are scheduled to be finalized for the Core Team’s use at the AtD Strategy Institution to be held in Atlanta, Georgia, in February.



**“Long-term impact requires change in systems as opposed to add-on programs or projects.”**



**Ouachita Technical College**  
**Malvern, Arkansas**  
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As indicated on page 1, the college will be simultaneously enter a strategic planning cycle and implementation of the Achieving the Dream Initiative. One step of these processes will be Employee Meetings in order to gather input and feedback from faculty and staff. **Please plan to attend one of the following meetings** (approximate time 1.5 to 2 hours) to be held in the Board Room:

1. Thursday, December 6 at 2 p.m.
2. Friday, December 7 at 1 p.m.
3. Monday, December 10 at 3 p.m.

### Achieving the Dream Preliminary Cohort Data

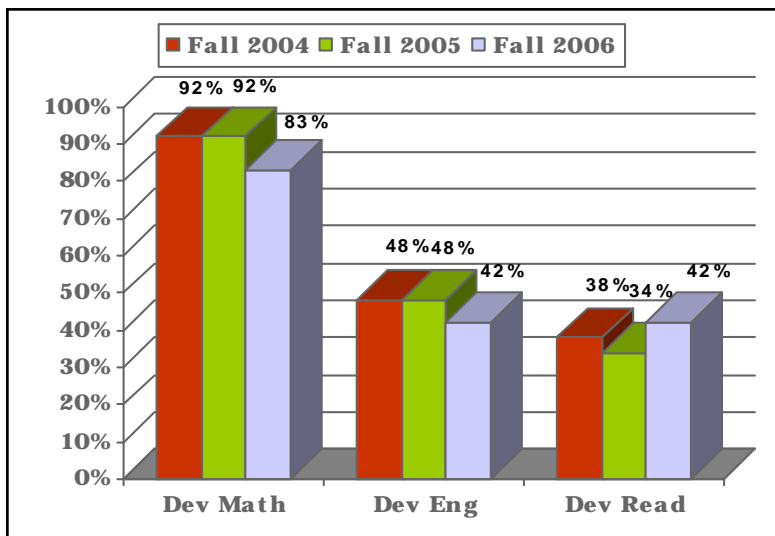
Cohort	RaceEth	Gender		Grand T..
		Female	Male	
2004	Am In/Ak Nat	5	2	7
	Asian	1	1	2
	Black	27	20	47
	Hispanic	3		3
	NRA	1		1
	White	140	87	227
2005	Black	27	28	55
	Hispanic	5	4	9
	NRA	2		2
	White	153	93	246
2006	Am In/AK Nat		1	1
	Asian	3		3
	Black	26	10	36
	Hispanic	1	2	3
	NRA	3	3	6
	White	126	76	202

Count of Number of Records broken down by Gender vs. Cohort and RaceEth.

Fall 2004 Cohort—N=287

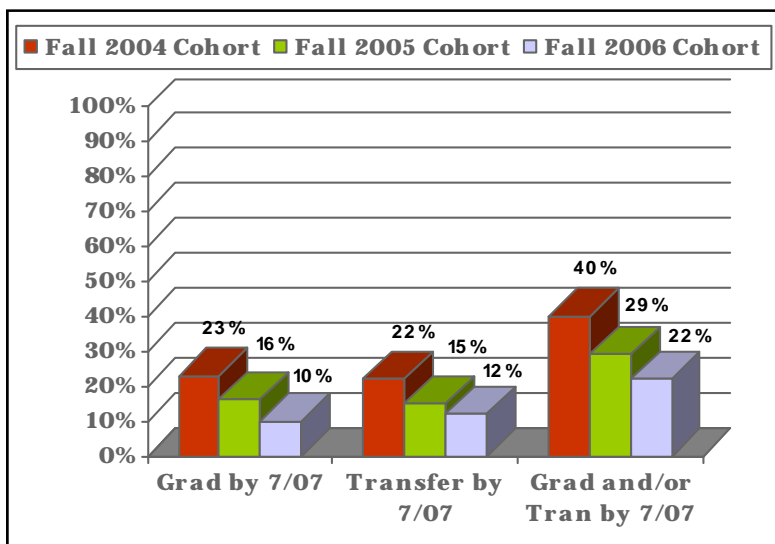
Fall 2005 Cohort—N=312

Fall 2006 Cohort—N=251



Cohort	RaceEth	Gender / FTIC			
		Female		Male	
		No	Yes	No	Yes
2004	Am In/Ak Nat		5	1	1
	Asian		1		1
	Black	7	20	3	17
	Hispanic	3			
	NRA	1			
	White	37	103	22	65
2005	Black	9	18	6	22
	Hispanic	2	3		4
	NRA	2			
	White	42	111	25	68
2006	Am In/AK Nat				1
	Asian		3		
	Black	17	9	4	6
	Hispanic		1		2
	NRA	2	1	2	1
	White	31	95	13	63

Count of Number of Records broken down by Gender and FTIC vs. Cohort and RaceEth.



FTIC=first time in college