

# The Completion Agenda: A Call to Action

Summary report from the November 10–11, 2010, meeting of the  
American Association of Community Colleges Commissions and Board of Directors

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## **Introduction: Launching the Call to Action**

In April 2010, the American Association of Community Colleges (AACC) joined with five other national organizations to express a shared commitment to student completion. These partner organizations (the Association for Community College Trustees, the Center for Community College Student Engagement, the League for Innovation in the Community College, the National Institute for Staff and Organizational Development, and the Phi Theta Kappa Honor Society) participated in an unprecedented joint-signing ceremony that committed our organizations to assisting our members in producing 50% more students with high-quality degrees and certificates by 2020. We believe now is the time to expand this commitment beyond our organizations to our campuses. That is why AACC has asked colleges across the country to sign their own completion commitment statements, modeled on the jointly signed document, “Democracy’s Colleges: Call to Action.”

The timing of such action is important. Community colleges are currently in the national spotlight, but the increased attention also means increased responsibility to our communities, our states, and our country—as well as to our students. AACC has been working to help member colleges and their students in several ways: through aggressive federal advocacy efforts; through the creation of a voluntary framework of accountability for community colleges; and through professional development institutes for trustees, college leaders, and future leaders. Our public commitment to raising student completion rates further underscores the transparency and accountability that community colleges are courageously espousing.

## **AACC Addresses the College Completion Challenge**

### *The Impetus for This Report*

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At its annual joint board and commission meeting (Washington, DC, November 10–11, 2010), AACC focused attention on college completion by presenting two panel discussions on the completion agenda, followed by breakout sessions in which participants were assigned to focus groups tasked with providing qualitative information about how to enhance and sustain

college completion. It was felt that this approach would be an effective way to examine the problems community colleges were facing, in particular by identifying barriers to completion. Two focus groups each were assigned the following four topics:

1. Commitment and how to get it.
2. Accountability for outcomes.
3. Completion toolkit.
4. Obstacles and how to overcome them.

To ensure balanced participation, AACC preassigned participants to the eight sessions prior to the meeting. For each session, members of the AACC Board of Directors were assigned to facilitate and AACC staff members were assigned as recorders. The purpose of the facilitator was to guide the discussion from topic to topic, to probe and encourage discussion and to ensure that all participants contributed to the conversation. The focus groups met for approximately 2.5 hours.

Following the focus-group sessions, the proceedings were summarized by the recorders, and the key points from each session were later reported during the general session on November 11, 2010. Following the meeting, the recorders’ notes were submitted to the meeting facilitator and author of this report, Christine Johnson McPhail, for review and consolidation. This report summarizes the ideas that emerged from discussion of the four assigned topics.

### *Participants*

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Focus group participants included members of the following:

- AACC Board of Directors
- AACC Commissions (Academic, Student, and Community Development; Communications and Marketing; Diversity, Inclusion, and Equity; Economic and Workforce Development ; Global Education; and Research, Technology, and Emerging Trends)
- National Council of State Directors of Community Colleges
- Voluntary Framework of Accountability Steering Committee
- AACC-Affiliated Councils

## Commitment and How to Get It

### Key Points

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Responsibility for completion is shared throughout the institution and the community.

- Completion must be embedded into the fabric of the institution: Relationships. Rigor. Relevance.
- Students want to be engaged and involved in the completion agenda; they want the data.
- We have a responsibility to increase completion rates, and we have a legacy to create.
- Completion should be made a part of the institution's strategic plan.
- States that have the best policy framework achieve the best completion rates.
- The community needs to be engaged with the framework.
- The completion agenda must be transparent and data driven.
- Community colleges must encourage the completion of certificates, degrees, etc. (which are valuable to your community, to your students, to business and industry).
- We need to communicate clearly what completion means.

### Suggestions for Advancing the Completion Agenda

Participants offered a wide variety of suggestions to advance the completion agenda. Some of these suggestions call for strategic changes in institutional policies and practices. These suggestions are also likely to require some colleges to focus on empowering faculty, staff, and students to work together in new and productive ways.

- Enhance instructional programs: Identify and disseminate best practices; shorten time to degree completion; contextualize general education; increase program flexibility; utilize cohort programming strategies; consider more prescriptive or guided career explorations; limit flexibility/options; institute mandatory requirements; redesign curriculum and instruction to reflect contemporary peda-

gogical practices; create culturally responsive learning and campus environments; accelerate the pace for getting out of developmental education; and enhance concurrent enrollment programs.

- Enhance external engagement practices: Reach out to K–12 superintendents and home schools; partner with universities; seek legislative support; engage area superintendents; focus on readiness; work with state policymakers; meet with faith-based leaders to talk about education and stress the positive consequences of education; reach out to families; connect with businesses and develop partnerships; investigate “early college high schools” as a promising option; and use state associations as a leverage point.
- Enhance faculty engagement and professional development for faculty and staff: Involve full- and part-time faculty in completion; get with the digital world; accept the “digital divide”—know your students; address faculty beliefs about students and engage increasing numbers of adjunct instructors in the process; get faculty involved in completion; and use data to cultivate a campus culture. (Liberal arts faculty needs convincing.)
- Improve student engagement: strengthen communication to students (telephone calls, e-mails to students); utilize student groups such as Phi Theta Kappa (PTK); view all prospective students as prospective completers (student success is an expectation); foster engagement through peer support; develop faculty and staff role models for students; increase the aspiration level of students; raise the comfort level of first-generation students and their families (go where they are comfortable); hold on-campus community events (noncollege events) to build comfort and familiarity with the campus; and build a sense of stewardship and engagement.
- Enhance student services: Consider early alert systems and mandatory orientations; improve financial aid; improve faculty advising; improve assessment and placement; create first-year experience courses; eliminate late registration; restrict access to certain programs; establish student success centers on community college campuses; train front-line staff to do a better job of counseling; create programs to better engage students; train counselors on degree audits—looking at benchmarks at various levels of credits accumulation; create additional funds/alternative sources for students (student emergency fund); and use the student/parent orientation model of the four-year institutions (i.e., develop an expectation that this is part

of the process. Are we sending the signal that we don't expect as much as the four-year institutions?).

- Strengthen technology and research infrastructure: Use technology and data to improve instruction, services, and administration; use technology for tracking an approach toward a degree, with identification of specific courses that lead to the degree; view investment in technology and institutional research (IR) capacity as an ROI; and determine ways to use data more efficiently, then utilize the data to promote the colleges. (Small colleges may need assistance in making the case for IR or institutional effectiveness staff.)
- Connect the completion work to the strategic plan.
- Strengthen internal and external communication: Articulate the differences in employment opportunity and money for associate degree students as compared to students without the degree. Colleges should use the language of completion with students, and more dialogue is needed (students who are close to faculty hear the message of completion, but generally, the message is not getting out to students).
- Build a culture of completion: Create incentives for students, faculty, and staff; inventory policies and practices; restrict options and choices; improve the campus climate for learning by carefully assessing what students are experiencing or by realigning resources to induce students to participate in activities that are associated with persistence and other desired outcomes of college; participate in Achieving the Dream; align curriculum with four-year colleges and universities; get students involved in the completion challenge; use holistic approaches; get everyone on the same page; encourage faculty to add completion to the syllabus (momentum points will create benchmarks); and foster the notion that completing a degree means success.
- Market the community college; better marketing for community college programs is needed.

## Accountability for Outcomes

It seems that community college educators are generally comfortable with being accountable for things they can control. However, when the focus turns to outcomes, they appear considerably less comfortable, since the outcomes to be achieved are affected by many factors not under the control of the

community college leader. Participants' thoughts on accountability and outcomes were as follows:

- Continue to work toward an agreement on what are useful and appropriate measures of accountability.
- Advocate for ways to change the community college funding model.
- Incorporate the Voluntary Framework of Accountability (VFA) into the student success agenda.
- Examine what the land-grant institutions are doing (setting out an accountability framework) to tell their story.
- Be open and transparent. Make an effort to make all information and data available to anyone with an interest or stake in the outcomes.
- Create support around measures and accountability efforts.
- Increase awareness and support by implementing a trustee's institute whereby the trustees are tasked with presenting the college's data. This practice may transform the board and shift the focus to student success rather than enrollment numbers.
- Understand that performance-based funding is on the table.
- Address fear of public reporting of data. Data should be juxtaposed with anecdotes and contextual information so that it makes sense and gives a more complete/accurate portrayal.
- Have more intimate conversations with constituencies—it's a better way to build support and share data than having big gatherings.
- Answer for constituents the question, "What is completion?" and make them understand that the definition may not be the traditional definition (a formal degree or certificate).
- Increase the value employers place on the associate degree.
- Ensure that transfer is seen as a valid and measurable part of a success rate or completion rate—whether the student takes three credits or 60 credits before transferring.

- Recognize that workforce measures amount to headcounts. Local investment boards have been a great resource; they understand the local economy and how the college fits into the equation.
- Talk to business and industry about how workforce contributions are measured. The very poignant point was made that business and industry can show—in dollars and cents—exactly what a particular community college program they contribute to adds to their bottom line. Community colleges must be better positioned to clearly show the return on investment.
- Encourage business people to go before the legislators in support of the college, because businesses can provide the evidence and numbers to show what the college contributes.
- In the area of workforce and economy, seek and advocate for federal grants and efforts to support data warehousing that ties education and labor/workforce outcomes; without these efforts, improvements in integration, and increased availability of data, we will not be able to get a handle on workforce and economic outcomes. The focus should be on building these data systems.
- Consider defining categories of students by what their goals are and integrating this approach into the completion agenda.
- Best practices for instructors and learning communities.
- Improved diagnostic tools for developmental students.
- Student success tools.
- Strategies for addressing students' environmental culture (parents' attitudes, lack of role models, etc.).
- Solid data on employment/skills trends (e.g., *Help Wanted: Projections of Jobs and Education Requirements Through 2018*, Carnevale, Smith, & Strohl, 2010).
- Strategies to help students articulate their dreams (what do they want to accomplish?).
- What students need to know about what college is like, what the workplace is like, and how they decide what they want to do.
- Strategies for dealing with the resurgence of men attending colleges.

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### *Toolkit Ideas From the Colleges*

It was clear from the discussion in the two toolkit focus groups that a major stumbling block to completion for some colleges lay in the fact that the learning environment is constantly changing, which requires colleges to update their resources on an ongoing basis. Colleges are in need of resources to remain abreast of these changes. Participants were asked to share what was taking place at their respective institutions.

- **Asnuntuck Community College (CT)** tailored its curriculum to meet the needs of local manufacturing. College leaders created pathways to certificates and transfer; 89% of students who took that route were hired at graduation. Follow-up interviews were conducted with successful students, and success stories were broadcast via TV programs and video streaming at the college. The college also hires retirees to review transcripts and identify near completer.
- **Barstow Community College's (CA)** focus is on high school completion rates. It partners with K–12 to make students aware of future career options and holds summer camps in emerging fields (e.g., solar, resource management, and logistics). Camps are also effective at engaging parents.

## Completion Toolkit

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### *What Should the Toolkit Contain?*

A number of participants viewed the toolkit as a viable way to provide resources to community colleges. The problem with developing a toolkit is in determining its contents. Participants generally agreed that a toolkit should be useful for all college types (urban, rural, suburban) and that it include the following:

- Learner analytics.
- Prototypes for different learning styles (project-based learning, contextualized teaching, and supplemental instruction).
- Strategies to improve teaching pedagogy focusing on the characteristics of adult learners; to create professional development opportunities; and to enhance the online skills of students and faculty.

- **Gateway Community and Technical College (KY)** offers year-round classes (three equal semesters), which are effective for giving instructors flexibility and relief. The college created a career academy to allow dual enrollment for high school students in preengineering, manufacturing, etc. The institutions split the FTE.
- **Maricopa Community Colleges (AZ)** created a partnership between Arizona State University and community colleges. This initiative created 91 pathways in 12 months (it has 2,000 students at present). The keys were incentives for completing a community college program and guaranteed admission to a matching university program. Alignment was ensured through collaboration among universities, high schools, and the state department of education. The state website ([www.aztransfer.com](http://www.aztransfer.com)) was created, but it needs to be better publicized.
- **North Carolina** collects student success data on a statewide basis. There are eight indicators crafted by state legislature. Course-by-course tracking is available online. But it is not being implemented well yet. An early college program has also been launched (with Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation support).
- **Oxnard College (CA)** participates in a statewide initiative that requires California state universities to accept credits for transfer. This should facilitate an increase in graduation rates. Benchmark data on retention, transfer, and cohorts provide information for statewide comparison. The college's Student Success Committee implements data and engages faculty.
- **Sacramento City College (CA)** launched the RISE program, geared toward Latino and Black men aged 18–21. The project has a peer-to-peer component, has been a huge success, and has won an award in California. The college is trying to replicate the program across the campus for all demographic types.
- **Triton College (IL)**, an Achieving the Dream college, has developed program alignments between high schools and community colleges. The college's website shares benchmarks of student success.

## Obstacles and How to Overcome Them

The completion agenda was viewed as a challenge within an existing challenge. It is impossible for community colleges to fulfill the broader mission of open-door institutions if they do not overcome the immediate challenges of ensuring student

access and success. Participants identified key obstacles and barriers to college completion. The summary of obstacles is structured into three categories: leadership and governance, finance and budget, and teaching and learning.

### *Leadership and Governance*

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- Lack of board concerns with student-learning outcomes.
- Policies and procedures contrary to the completion agenda.
- Limited conversations about what needs to change.
- Unwillingness of presidents to engage in “culture of evidence” conversations.
- Fear of lack of support from legislators and trustees.
- Unions, collective bargaining, and shared governance practices.

### *Finance and Budget*

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- Community college funding based on access model.
- Few incentives for improved outcomes.
- The “doing more with less” syndrome.
- Funding models not based on completion.
- Lack of state and local policy.
- Cost-of-living issues; lack of jobs.

### *Teaching and Learning*

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#### *Faculty*

- Engagement of faculty beyond academic content.
- Inadequate involvement of adjunct faculty.
- Teaching framework based on an economic deficit model.
- Lack of understanding about the meaning of college-ready.
- Entrenched faculty.
- Faculty workload issues.
- Outdated pedagogical practices.

### *Students*

- Students need assistance with goals (faculty and student-services advice).
- Lack of academic preparation.
- Lack of student motivation.
- Balancing work, school, and life issues.
- Cost-of-living issues (economy).
- Students are confronted with and challenged by too many choices.
- Lack of exposure to college culture.
- Lack of accountability: not taking their share of the responsibility for their learning experiences.
- The culture of the student is very real (many students don't want to go home and talk about success in college as they are afraid friends and peers will not enforce positive results).

### *Institution*

- Federal mandates (inflexible regulations such as federal student aid).
- Lack of definition of completion agenda (locally); lack of knowledge of college completion and readiness issues.
- Curriculum alignment issues (internal and external).
- Rural colleges have unique issues, such as access to transportation.
- Inadequate or lack of student support services: child care, academic advisors, job counseling, etc.
- Increased enrollments along with an increased number of academically underprepared and diverse student populations.
- Faculty-centric versus student-centric campuses.
- Too much emphasis on workforce preparation versus degree completion.
- Outdated skill competencies (among employee groups).
- Lack of adequate data systems and research capacity.
- No incentives.
- Placements of graduates.

- Rate of success with online students. Some colleges are not happy with the rate of completion.
- Differentiation between community college courses from state to state.
- Overall quality of teaching.

## **Examples of What Some Colleges and States Are Doing to Meet the Completion Challenge**

The suggestions offered here were solicited from participants in one or more of the focus groups. No additional work has been done to determine the impact of these practices at the institutions. As reported by the representatives from these institutions, these colleges have found ways to create supportive learning environments that promote completion and student success.

- **Community College of Philadelphia** embedded the concept of completion into the fabric of the institution. The board asked how it could be more effective. It looked at strategic direction and where it could bring value. About two years ago, it overhauled the infrastructure. It is now restricted to two committees, Finance and Student Outcomes, which focus strategic direction on completion and student success. The college embedded performance indicators into the infrastructure; it created agreements with 10 senior institutions to guarantee junior status and scholarships. Temple University receives the most students. Data indicate that if students transfer to Temple with an associate of arts (AA) degree, 84% get a bachelor's degree; if they transfer without an AA, 63% get a bachelor's degree.
- **North Idaho College** redesigned its technical education programs. The college established eight-week blocks of study leading to a certificate or work. The curriculum was realigned to include certificates that lead to an associate in applied science degree—with measurable outcomes. College leaders also created building blocks: one semester, one year, applied associate, and applied baccalaureate. It is currently seeing an increase in completion rates. It defined student deficiencies. The impetus was employer-driven.
- **The community college system in North Carolina** launched a campaign where each college lists best practices for completion connected to performance measures. Leaders also held a listening tour. There are two teams: one focuses on innovation and the other on performance indicators.

- **The community colleges in Florida** launched a statewide campaign on completion. The state also has a model based on common course numbering.
- **The State University of New York** is looking at articulation agreements and transfer-student scholarships—an incentive issue.
- **Universities in the state of Washington** give community college students priority transfer.
- **The state of Texas** launched the “Closing the Gaps” completion agenda.
- **The California Community College System** created transfer degrees where the associate degree is 60 hours and transfers to California State Universities at 60 hours (and the state can require no more than an additional 60 units for the baccalaureate); the California State Legislature formed a task force for student success to report on best practices.
- **Project Win-Win** focuses on enabling students to earn an associate degree.
- **White Mountains Community College (NH)** uses a cohort-building strategy with a University Connection, where community college faculty members teach university-level courses (teacher education program). It has an early learning center; it limits options for students who move toward a prescribed course of study.
- **The Bill & Melinda Gates Communities Learning in Partnership Program**, National League of Cities, and seven cities are teaming up to boost college graduation rates by better coordinating the services that colleges, schools, and communities provide to students. It is funded to determine best practices for students of color, with a focus on men. It is important to review data to move the conversation to completion and alignment of high school and community college curriculum.
- **Davidson County Community College (NC)** is being asked by the business community about completion rates, since communities are in competition with each other for employers.
- **The Maryland Association of Community Colleges** launched a statewide initiative called “A Promise to Act.” This statewide call focuses on the completion agenda (16 colleges have agreed to use completion data).
- **Howard Community College (MD)** has aligned its mission and strategic plan and has connected data to completion. There is nothing in the strategic plan that cannot be measured. The college also engaged faculty and refined its general education core.
- **North Dakota University System Roundtable** established a dual-credit program—11 colleges are involved. The president and vice president are focusing on completion. Now, a collective voice goes to the legislature. The program is designed to keep the workforce in state. Articulation programs such as 2+2+2 were established; University Center on Campus is increasing completion; and degree audits that lead to contact with students near completion to encourage completion (joint use of facilities) are in place.
- **Baltimore City Community College (MD)** developed a student-mentoring program and has freshmen tutorial services. There are plans to conduct a press conference to discuss completion rates on campus.
- **South Georgia College** offers a Degree Works software product (advising tool) that can be accessed by students. The college increased the student technology fee to pay for the product. Notes can be electronically collected about each student (e.g., whether a student works full time).
- **Gateway Community and Technical College (KY)** has mandatory advising for development students, peer mentoring, and tutoring. There is an 86% retention rate with these students. This program costs a lot of money.
- **Tennessee’s Technology Centers** use cohorts and accelerated learning. They are competing with community colleges, but they can’t be compared. The state wants community colleges to be more like the technology centers, which may cause a shift in the colleges’ foci.
- **McHenry County College (IL)** implemented a “laddering curriculum” and gives students credentials for what they have done, which they can then use to reenter higher education. High school readiness is important to this college. College representatives met with high school leaders in the area. They all took the COMPASS test to illustrate what students need to know to enter college. Some high schools appear to be teaching to No Child Left Behind standards rather than teaching the skills needed to be a successful college student.



- **Baton Rouge Community College (LA)** offers a 15-week session and two 7-week sessions. The college engaged the financial aid staff in the success agenda at the beginning of the process. Mandatory orientation is on the table. The college is willing to try new things; traditional offerings don't always work.

## Communicating the Message

Community college educators play a key role in efforts to promote student success by speaking plainly and in an informed manner about the importance of college completion. Community college leaders must make decisions in alignment with the completion agenda.

- Differentiate between audiences. To faculty/staff, the message is, “You be in charge of how you are measured, not someone else.” To legislators, the message is, “Bottom-line” or “Community colleges enhance the state by . . .” To independent school districts, the messages are the following: “College-readiness of students,” “Let’s build trust and work together,” “There is no blame game,” and “Let’s share data and solve problems.” Superintendents are key constituents and partners.
- The student audience is key, too. Get students involved with completion, and get them to help other students and engage them in the process. Work with PTK.
- Promote the fact that we, as part of the community college sector, are working collectively; however, for local audiences, we must be able to disaggregate data to see the college’s part in moving the completion dial.
- Share success stories. Leverage business and industry to “tell stories.” One participant shared how a local clinic tells stories and promotes how students from the community college are utilized.
- Know your audience. Talk about the successes, but be able to back these up with data.
- Understand why our numbers are improving, so we know what works; home in on the numbers and help others do the same.
- The first message is that we must always emphasize “educating with data”—the public must understand our student populations. The second message is for the presidents. We must help manage their fear of “looking bad,” so the message is that we are here to “help the college to improve, not to look bad.” Get overarching bodies involved, such as the State Higher Education Executive Officers and National Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators and see what was developed in response to the Student Right-to-Know Act.
- Have five numbers that are critical to your institution and your community. Have consistent data (use AACC for this). Community college educators must research the economic impact numbers for their state.

## Emergent Questions From the Focus-Group Discussions

While the summary notes suggest that some colleges have already answered questions about how to launch or build a completion agenda, the focus-group participants suggested that the completion agenda raises additional questions. This section presents some of those emergent questions.

1. Will the completion agenda serve as an incentive for students to falsify their intent when they enroll—for example, for financial aid reasons?
2. How can colleges engage online students?
3. What is the retention rate of online students?
4. What is more important: the teacher or the method of teaching?
5. Will the completion agenda restrict access?
6. Will colleges skim students from the top?
7. Can colleges focus on all students?
8. How can colleges create incentives for students to get the AA degree?
9. How can colleges increase completion rates?
10. How can colleges strengthen the engagement of students? What’s working?
11. What about incentives? We should focus on how states are positioned—are incentives unclear or in opposition?
12. How do we engage adjunct instructors in the process?
13. What are the consequences of completion?
14. What would be the return of investment if we had more completers?
15. Do students believe it is in their best interests to complete?

16. Who will write the script of completion? The definition of completion does not match the community college model.
17. What happens after 2020? Are we done?
18. What are the numbers in each state to reach the 2020 goal? Does AACC have these data?
19. What about the lack of jobs in the economy and how that relates to the number of completers entering the job market?
20. Are data available about how community colleges are raising the skill levels of people who attend and what the long-term effect is on the overall lifelong success of a student?
21. Should students be required to complete an AA before transferring?
22. Are there best practices for faculty to use as resources?

benefits of the completion agenda and the best practices.

- Conduct local and regional conversations around the call for action.
- Engage and convene meetings with K–12 systems and universities. There must be a seamless transition between all sectors.
- Identify ways to build relationships with adult basic education providers.
- Identify ways to work with student organizations such as PTK. This organization, as well as students, is ahead of us. PTK has developed a toolkit. It plans to disseminate posters regarding students’ roles in completion.
- Develop a national campaign/agenda that informs the community about student success efforts. We need to talk to people about success; they don’t understand what community colleges are doing to get students to complete.
- Provide a student success “elevator speech” for community colleges.
- Build upon the White House Summit. Utilize technology to help get the message across. Develop and disseminate the toolkit.
- Open the Achieving the Dream Strategy Institute to non-ATD colleges.
- Find ways to support the Association of Community College Trustees (ACCT) Governance Institute. Vulnerable CEOs are less likely to have this conversation without additional support from AACC.
- Help colleges build a culture of candor, not blame. This might take a while.
- Take credit for what is already being done. Promote what AACC is doing.
- Provide technical support for those in the field (possibly through webinars); train facilitators to go into the colleges for technical support and engagement support.
- Help manage the fear of going public with data, which is especially hard to do in a climate that is so heavily focused on credentials; saying that “success looks like all these

## What Can AACC Do to Promote Accountability and Support the Sector?

AACC is the primary advocacy organization for the nation’s community colleges. Participants identified ways that AACC might advance the completion agenda.

- Continue to work with the federal government on financial aid. It is hard to implement some programs with current regulations. An area of concern is that there is no aid for working with the prison system—prisoners can’t get financial aid.
- Continue to work on VFA. Community colleges are currently using measures that are not appropriate to all institutions.
- Help policymakers understand the problems surrounding the current community college funding methods. Policymakers are currently using incomplete data to drive funding for community colleges.
- Help states to get legislators to understand the benefits. Currently, there’s no incentive to get degree and transfer. Why would students complete before transfer?
- Engage with university programs to guarantee transfer.
- Educate the community college community about the

things” (and is not just a formal award) is harder to do when a completion agenda is the focus.

- Establish a portal for a searchable database to share best practices.
- Tell the story at the national level.
- Keep legislators and colleges apprised of effects of federal leadership turnover.
- Differentiate the needs of urban and rural colleges.
- Explore the relationship between funding models and the completion agenda.
- Inform members of changes that affect the completion agenda (e.g., reinvented GED tests to meet course-level standards).

## Organizational Resources

The following programs and initiatives were identified as being useful to colleges seeking to advance a completion agenda.

- Achieving the Dream: Community Colleges Count (AACC)  
<http://www.achievingthedream.org/>
- Advanced Technological Education (AACC)  
<http://www.aacc.nche.edu/Resources/aaccprograms/ate/Pages/default.aspx>

- Campus Compact  
<http://www.compact.org/>
- CollegeFish.org and the Community College Completion Challenge (PTK) <http://www.cccompletionchallenge.org/>
- Governance Institute for Student Success (ACCT)  
<http://www.governance-institute.org/>
- Make It Personal: College Completion (AACC)  
<http://www.aacc.nche.edu/Resources/aaccprograms/horizons/Pages/mipcc.aspx>
- MentorLinks (AACC)  
<http://www.aacc.nche.edu/Resources/aaccprograms/mentor-links/Pages/default.aspx>
- Plus 50 Initiative Completion Strategy (AACC)  
<http://plus50.aacc.nche.edu/Pages/Default.aspx>
- Voluntary Framework of Accountability (AACC)  
<http://www.aacc.nche.edu/Resources/aaccprograms/vfa/Pages/default.aspx>