

DRAFT

Problem Statement 1: In order to provide implementation strategies for graduation, retention or developmental education, a statewide integrated data system that connects K-12, workforce education, higher education, and workforce services is needed. Such a system does not currently exist in Arkansas.

Evidence: There are only a few states that have the ability to track students from K-16 to entry into the workforce. Each presenter spoke about the importance of using data to make informed decisions about policy and program needs in higher education. Creating a data system that will validate institutional needs will result in both money and time being targeted to address graduation, retention and/or developmental education in Arkansas.

Recommendation	Time Horizon	Rationale
1-A. Determine the data elements needed to make good decisions for graduation, retention, and developmental education.	2008	Without accurate and appropriate data, good decisions about intervention cannot be made.
1-B. Determine what needs to be done to connect the systems. Start the process of either connecting the data systems or buying the software to extract the data needed. Determine staffing and funding needs to operate the system and put in a budget request. Implement new data system.	2008	Current ADHE staffing is inadequate; a funding source must be added for both the addition of new software and personnel. Such an integrated system would allow campuses to better assess programs and services provided to students, and to positively impact state-wide policies and campus programs.
1-C. Develop staffing needs and funding to strengthen colleges' research capacities for student data.	2009-10	Additional staff will be needed at the campus level to collect and deliver data to the statewide system.

Problem Statement 2: Since many students are under prepared for college-level work, remediation (developmental education) is critical for students to succeed, and ultimately receive a degree or certificate.

Evidence: While emerging national research indicates that developmental education programs positively contribute to student persistence and graduation, efforts in this area must be prescriptive or there is a great likelihood that students will not be successful. A large percentage of students educated in two-year colleges are from groups of people who are typically underserved.

According to a report to the ADHE Coordinating Board for Fall 2007, 52.9% of students tested below a 19 on the ACT resulting in the need to take one or more developmental courses. For two-year colleges, the numbers were even higher with 76.8% of students testing into one or more courses, and 65.6% of students testing into two or more developmental education courses. According to the information provided, there are large pockets of the state where the problem is much worse. In fact, 10 of the 22 two-year colleges have remediation rates reaching 80% or higher. Little data is currently available on the success of these students after completing developmental education courses.

There is much information available on best practices through the National Center for Adult Education, Achieving the Dream project, and the Career Pathways project. These recommendations should be revisited as new and additional information becomes available through these programs.

Recommendation	Time Horizon	Rationale
2-A. Colleges should identify faculty with demonstrated success teaching developmental education students, and provide professional development/training for these faculty members.	2009-10	Instructors who have been successful have a greater chance of helping these students succeed. Professional development/training will further enhance the teaching skills these faculty bring to the classroom.
2-B. Developmental curriculum should be aligned to subsequent college-level courses to help students succeed in the college courses. Reports on success rates should be collected.	2011-12	Data should be used to improve the curriculum to increase student success in developmental courses, and subsequent college-level courses.

Recommendation	Time Horizon	Rationale
2-C. Colleges must be more prescriptive in working with developmental students, and in providing support services for these students.	2011-12	Developmental students benefit from an environment where their progress is followed and there is a focus on their success.
2-D. Create a process for adult education students to move from a GED into college classes without the need for developmental education.	2011-12	National models have been developed and should be emulated in Arkansas to assist in preparing students for the transition to college-level work.

Problem Statement 3: It is especially important that students be retained from the first to the second semester. If students are not retained from one semester to the next, then they will never graduate.

Evidence: Cope and Hannah, in conducting research of freshmen students, have shown that almost half of all attrition takes place during the freshman year with the majority taking place during the second semester or before the third semester of enrollment.

(Insert Arkansas Data)

Educators must be more prescriptive with students who are identified early on as those likely to experience problems. Fostering early academic successes will lead to retention and goal attainment.

Recommendation	Time Horizon	Rationale
3-A. Colleges should have an early warning student support system to intervene when students are not doing well in a class.	2011-12	Early intervention results in retaining students for longer periods with higher success rates.
3-B. Colleges should improve student success with expanded student services.	2011-12	The Career Pathways model of intrusive student support services has a demonstrated successful retention rate of 88%.
3-C. A scholarship program needs to be established to provide tuition for concurrent credit students as a way of encouraging students to get a good start on college prior to full participation in college.	2011-12	Students who have earned college credit prior to enrolling have a greater likelihood of success in college.

Problem Statement 4: The number of Arkansans with a certificate, associate’s degree, or bachelor’s degree is below the national average.

Evidence: According to national data, Arkansas has fewer persons over the age of 25 with an associate’s degree (6.2%) than all other states except one. Arkansas will need 165,854 persons to obtain a degree by 2025 to meet the anticipated need of 55% of the adult population with a degree (NCHEMS) in order to be globally competitive.

Existing barriers must be eliminated in order to maximize the opportunity for students to succeed. Success should be defined as obtaining a degree or certificate, reaching an educational goal, and/or transferring to a four-year institution to pursue a bachelor’s degree. Some of these barriers require policy and/or legislative changes, while others require changes in institutional behaviors. While Arkansas ranks third in graduation rates (20%) at two-year colleges, and is only 2% below the national average (22%), this data only reflects first-time full-time students who enroll in the fall semester, and more importantly does not reflect the overall student graduation rate which includes part-time students.

Additionally, in order to meet the goal of having the number of graduates to allow Arkansas to be a player in the global economy, colleges must not overlook the need for increased numbers of minority, low income, and non-traditional students .

Arkansas also ranks next to the last in the percentage of the population above the age of 25 with a bachelor’s degree. Two-year colleges can be an effective and important player by encouraging more students to transfer to a four-year college to obtain a baccalaureate degree. The *Entering Undergraduate Transfer Students Between Arkansas Institutions, Fall 2007* report, lists 2,538 two-year college students who transferred to a four-year institution. That number needs to be increased.

Recommendation	Time Horizon	Rationale
4-A. Remove transfer barriers across all levels e.g. common course numbering; finishing the process of articulation for all courses part of the Associate of Arts degree through the Arkansas Course Transfer System.	2011-12	Students need clear information on courses needed to complete degrees among institutions.
4-B. Encourage students near graduation to return and complete a degree (identify these students, and send letters encouraging them to return). Remove obstacles to graduation (such as graduation fees). Statewide effort should be made to contact these students.	2010-11	There are students who have completed significant numbers of hours, but have not obtained a degree.

Recommendation	Time Horizon	Rationale
4-C. Reverse Transfer – Encourage students who have transferred to a four-year university without earning a degree to transfer back credit hours that are needed to award an associate’s degree or certificate.	2010-11	Students who earn a certificate or an associate’s degree will be more employable than students with accumulated hours of college credit with no degree.
4-D. Financial incentives to encourage associate’s degree recipients to obtain a bachelor’s degree. A tuition offset program, such as Georgia has implemented, could be offered which would pay the difference between tuition costs at a two-year college and those at a university for students who obtain an associate’s degree, have a 3.0 GPA, and transfer to a state-supported university. In an effort to assist with the transfer of two-year students to four-year institutions, universities should consider increasing their transfer scholarships.	2011-12	Students who enter a university with an associate’s degree are more likely to graduate than entering freshmen. Financial incentives are likely to increase the number of transfers and the overall graduation rates of two-year colleges.
4-E. Increase needs-based scholarships such as the GO! Opportunities Grant and the Workforce Improvement Grant.	2011-12	Increasing needs-based scholarships will help increase the number of low-income students who attend college.