



## Celebrating 25 Years of Scaling OCCRL's Work: Reflections from OCCRL's Director

by Professor and OCCRL Director, Debra D. Bragg, PhD

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Twenty-five years is a long time, so how could it have flown by so fast? This year, the Office of Community College Research and Leadership (OCCRL) marks its 25<sup>th</sup> year at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. Started through a small grant from the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE), OCCRL began as a vision of the faculty in the Department of Vocational and Technical Education who saw a need to focus attention on postsecondary vocational-technical education that was growing in community colleges throughout the state. The department was also part of the National Center for Research in Vocational Education (NCRVE), led by the University of California at Berkeley, which provided an amazing opportunity to conduct national research. Knowing Illinois' long commitment to community colleges, and its home to one of the largest community college systems in the U.S., how could a young person like me say no? After all, Illinois is my home, and the opportunity to contribute to improving the public education system in the state where I grew up was very persuasive.

Since 1989, OCCRL researchers have studied countless state and national issues facing students transitioning to, through and beyond the community college to further education, training, and employment. The initial years of the center focused extensively on research and evaluation of the federal investment in technical preparation (tech prep) and related topics such as dual credit and work-based learning. Also during this early period, OCCRL conducted research on outcomes assessment, which has never left the core of OCCRL's portfolio. Implementation of career and technical education (the current parlance for vocational-technical education), as well as workforce and economic development, have been other persistent threads of interest to OCCRL researchers, including full-time staff and graduate student researchers who have gone on to lead state education systems, community colleges, and other groups interested in this work. In addition, a good number of OCCRL alums have gone on to faculty positions, and some have taken positions of leadership in other countries. The spread of talent is far and wide after 25 years, and we are very proud of this accomplishment.

OCCRL celebrates 25 years in 2014

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In recent years, OCCRL's research agenda has focused on career pathways, including transition from K-12 and adult education to the community college. The preparation of youth and adults for college and careers is a very important aspect of OCCRL's research, as it is for the new Pathways Resource Center, started in 2012. So too is transfer from the community college to the baccalaureate degree, including research on associate degrees conferred after students transfer to the university as well as the community college baccalaureate and applied baccalaureate degrees. Our research also includes the study of pathways in Australia, Canada, and England where similar policy developments are taking place. Moreover, student transition from college to employment is of enormous importance to our evaluation of two Trade Adjustment Act Community College and Career Training (TAACCCT) consortium grants that give us an opportunity to better understand how 16 community colleges located throughout the U.S. are engaging in President Obama's College Completion Agenda.

As I reflect on the many years with OCCRL, I can't help but think of the incredibly talented people who have worked as graduate students, professional staff, and faculty researchers. Although my count isn't exact, I estimate nearly 100 graduate research assistants have been supported by OCCRL, and over 50 doctoral students have completed degrees with a focus on the study of community colleges, many of whom worked at OCCRL. I am also grateful to our generous sponsors, starting with ISBE and the Illinois Community College Board (ICCB). Other Illinois agency funders include the Illinois Board of Higher Education (IBHE) and Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO). On the federal level, OCCRL has benefited from generous funding from the U.S. Department of Education, the U.S. Department of Labor, and the National Science Foundation. Private foundations have enabled us to look at policy and practice from a different perspective, and we thank the Boeing Corporation, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, the Joyce Foundation, and Lumina Foundation for their support. Several of these funders are currently investing in OCCRL's research on scaling transformative change in the community college and Credit When It's Due (CWID), which focuses on (reverse) transfer policy in 15 states. All large-scale projects, these efforts give us the opportunity to contribute to the national dialogue on critical issues related to college access and completion and to equitable outcomes pertaining to education and employment.

Looking specifically at this *Update on Research and Practice* newsletter, I am proud that OCCRL has produced two substantive issues without any break over the 25 years. A quick glance over the issues we have addressed provides a useful lens from which to reflect on OCCRL's current (and future) research agenda. Research projects on the aforementioned topics are clearly evident, but so are many translational efforts that OCCRL has undertaken to move research to policy and practice, which brings me to this particular issue of *Update*. Our focus this time is on sustainability and scaling of innovations that seek community colleges' leadership in training displaced and other low-skilled workers for employment. This issue of *Update* acquaints readers with the research that OCCRL is doing on several large-scale initiatives that may have long-lasting impact on education and the economy, including two evaluations of Trade Adjustment Act Community College and Career Training (TAACCCT) consortia, a national study of Credit When It's Due (CWID) implementation in 15 states, and research on the Transformative Change Initiative Scaling Framework, which involves qualitative research to better understand how the scaling of innovation happens within and among community colleges operating in the local, state, and national context.

Looking back, I can't say the past 25 years have been easy, but I can say they have been rewarding. As the late Nelson Mandela said, "It always seems impossible until it's done." While leading OCCRL for 25 years doesn't come close to impossible, it is an achievement in which I take pride. OCCRL has scaled to the point where its continuation well into the future is promising. With a current staff of about 25 full-time researchers, GRAs, affiliated faculty, and consultants, how could it not? Undoubtedly, OCCRL will continue to explore questions that are vitally important to policy and practice and to do this work in a way that engages researchers, practitioners, policy-makers, and others in learning, growing and changing in ways that are beneficial. For me, nothing is more important than building upon the rewarding research over the last 25 years and seeing OCCRL's contributions continue for a long time to come.



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# An Interview with Dr. Adrianna Kezar: Opportunities and Challenges for Scaling Up Innovation in Higher Education

by Robin LaSota, Post Doctoral Research Associate, Office of Community College Research and Leadership



Adrianna Kezar

This interview builds upon research presented in Kezar, A. (2011, February). "What is the best way to achieve broader reach of improved practices in higher education?" *Innovation in Higher Education*, 36, 235-247.



Robin LaSota

**LASOTA:** Why is scale-up important for higher education, and particularly for community colleges?

**KEZAR:** Higher education needs to integrate new innovations and adapt to new conditions. Funders of higher education expect institutions to adopt the best of what we know. As new ideas emerge from neuroscience and new studies recommend important changes to pedagogy, stakeholders want higher education to integrate important innovations, such as new technologies, or adapt to new conditions, such as decreased funding. It is in our own best interest to be able to adapt to different environments and integrate important innovations, so these are reasons that it is so important that we learn better about scaling up changes. There are a variety of different changes that any higher education institution, including community colleges, need to constantly respond to in sustaining their mission. So, we all need to change and adapt.

**Higher education does change, and should work on changing with more intentionality.** Throughout the history of higher education, external groups have expressed that we have not been very open to scaling up changes. I don't fully agree with that. If you look at the history of higher education, we've changed a lot over time. I think we need to continue to think about the way we transform our institutions, because sometimes scaling has occurred without intentionality. We can do better at integrating important changes more intentionally. We get a bad reputation for not scaling up changes, yet higher education engages in scale-up more than is commonly perceived.

**LASOTA:** Which models of scaling have you found effective in higher education, and which models do not work as well?

**KEZAR:** Top-down change models are generally ineffective. In general, change models have to be adapted to the type of institution or organization or system in which it lives and exists—its ecology. Colleges and universities are professional organizations where faculty and staff are trained and have expertise. In these systems, top-down changes do not tend to work as well. Professional staff do not respond well to mandates. Instead they respond to participating in the deliberation about adapting a change or innovation in their own work.

Even in corporate enterprises, employees find it difficult to be able to make authentically the changes in their own work, if they do not have ownership or involvement in the change process. We know that particularly when you have professional staff, their input is important and they enrich the change being discussed.

**Collaborative deliberation about adoption works better in higher education.** Models where people can be involved in adoption of new processes and changes and have an opportunity for discussion are more effective. Some of the large-scale change initiatives in higher education are using learning communities or other organizational learning models where faculty and administrators work in teams to deliberate about changes and interventions.

Let's take the example of a college administration seeking to better integrate technology into the classroom. A top-down mandate of the use of a particular technology in the classroom using traditional policy models of change would not be as successful as a collaborative model of technology adoption. Top-down processes do not generate the buy-in from professional staff and also miss out on faculty and staff input in aligning the technology to their methods. Say for example a faculty member uses a lot of case study assignments requiring active, collaborative learning. Unless the technological platform adopted by the college facilitates that type of work, it would actually make the learning environment worse rather than better. It would take away from the positive aspects that the faculty member has integrated into his or her pedagogy.

**LASOTA:** How prevalent is a culture of collaboration and dialogue in community colleges, and what are some of the barriers for having this type of organizational learning and collaborative dialogue?

**KEZAR:** Historical bureaucratic structures serve as barriers to collaborative change. This is one of the great challenges of higher education. We are created, like many bureaucracies, in silos of disciplines, and in bureaucratic divisions that often do not communicate and sometimes divide between faculty, administration, and staff themselves. We don't have a structure

or history that facilitates the kind of models of change that work best. On many community college campuses, or any type of college campus for that matter, people don't regularly work together across the boundaries of role, division, or department.

**More boundary-crossing collaborative structures are needed for scaling-up meaningful changes.** In those community colleges and campuses that have fewer barriers and that have leadership that has broken down boundaries, they are better able to learn together and to adapt and create changes. The historical structure of higher education is the largest barrier. You have models in community colleges where this has changed, where they have a one-stop-shop for student services, for example. As we have more models like that that bring people together and create more team structures, scaling up important changes or innovations becomes more feasible and meaningful.

**LASOTA:** As you've studied leaders in higher education and community colleges, what are effective leadership strategies for breaking down these barriers to engage in productive, collaborative dialogue?

**KEZAR:** **Leadership support of cross-functional teams on areas such as retention and completion is often a good place to start.** Cross-functional work groups are another example of models that break down the traditional barriers. The most common type of cross-functional work groups at community colleges or universities focuses on the topics of retention and completion. These are areas that are recognized as requiring systemic input from across units, disciplines, and divisions. It's a good starting place for people to see the necessity of working across roles, and it helps you to envision other changes.

**Effective leaders understand historic barriers to collaboration on their campus.** Leaders are more effective when they consider the system and its history. Without understanding how embedded the barriers are in terms of the structure and culture of higher education institutions, you can't begin to make the systemic changes. You cannot mandate collaboration from the top-down, and expect embedded change across the institution.

With the historical understanding, then a leader should ask: What can I do to rethink our structures and cultures, our awards and incentives? How do I change our evaluation system so that we reward collaborative problem-solving and begin to change people's value systems? Leaders do better when they recognize that they need to do more than tell people to collaborate; they need to put in place the structures that support collaboration and break down the barriers. This type of leadership makes people less frustrated. Because other people will say that: "I'd like to collaborate; I'd like to think together the way that you are talking about, and adapt, but there are too many things in my way."

**Effective leaders think about the value systems, as well as the professional structures and rewards.** If people don't feel like they are rewarded for retaining students, and there are policies in places that somehow facilitate making the work of staff and faculty easier if certain students were to leave, then faculty and staff will just follow those rewards that exist in the system.

What's driving people's activities on campus? If the desired goal is to integrate and have better retention on this campus, what are the values that might get in the way of better outcomes? Are there faculty and staff who believe that there are students who do not belong here? If people hold those beliefs, then those values will affect the large-scale change efforts to improve students' retention, for example.

**Effective leaders also think about the politics.** For example, a leader may think, "If I want to improve the campus' retention program, but it would mean closing a particular department or consolidating particular departments to get people to work together or more closely... what are the politics around that and how do I negotiate that ahead of time?" A politically savvy leader avoids being blind-sided by politics that make him or her unable to make that change, which would have helped support students.

**Effective leaders are multi-faceted thinkers, who think about the sub-systems within higher education and use that knowledge to become more productive facilitators of change.** Leaders generally do not lack the ideas or solutions for creating positive changes. A lot of leaders are not as good at thinking the necessary changes in values, learning structures, political barriers, governance structures, and institutional norms as well as specific domains that facilitate or hinder large-scale change such as professional development and training of existing staff and training of new hires. These are elements which make larger scale, institutional changes happen.

**LASOTA:** How should we think about balancing models of scaling that emphasize fidelity of implementation versus ongoing adaptation to specific contexts?

**KEZAR:** **The tension between adhering to innovation fidelity and adaptation to the local context will become increasingly a challenge in higher education.** For community colleges, in particular, there are lots of large scale projects funded by organizations such as Gates and Lumina that are hoping to develop models at one campus that then are exported, largely wholesale. A lot of these projects realize that implementation needs to be modified to the local context because community colleges in particular, need to be very responsive to their local environment. As an institution considers a particular model approach to improving student success, one community college is going to have a very different student population than the other. We know that different areas draw different students, and that meeting their needs must be a tailored process.

**An effective approach is to take the best from large or small-scale funded projects and adapt the core set of ideas and principles to your own campus.** Campuses need to look at models or changes and say, “given our unique situation, given our student population or region or industries in the local economy, given community groups we work with or communities we work in, we need to think of all these kinds of variations, then say what is the degree to which we would modify these ideas that have some relevance.”

Consider the example of scaling-up one particular advising model across community colleges. If someone were to say, “This *is the* advising model, and this advising model is the *one way* that we know will work with all students,” is probably not going to be adequate. Because at the next campus, staff may say, “The advising model does not include emergency funds, and we have to think about emergency funds because many of our students have significant financial barriers, and they need more access to such emergency funds. Our advising model has to take into account that variation.” So, if you are to think about a particular advising model being adopted from one institution to another, it may not account for these differences in student population and needs.

**LASOTA:** Let’s talk about the role of data and inquiry, a culture of knowing your students in a community college in order to effectively adapt an innovation. What have you seen are some effective strategies for knowing your students and then adapting and scaling practices, based on data?

**KEZAR:** Many great models exist for data-based analyses to guide change efforts, such as the Equity Scorecard®. Just across the hallway from me at the University of Southern California are Estela Bensimon and Alicia Dowd who led the development of the Equity Scorecard®. It is a research-based model for taking campus-specific data to examine equity in access, retention, completion, and excellence for historically marginalized groups such as African Americans, Latinos, and others. The Equity Scorecard® invites campuses to examine the question of “how well are they serving students of color?” The aim of the Equity Scorecard® is to identify equity gaps and then inquire into routine practices—e.g., admissions, tutoring, advising, etc.—and assess how well they work for students of color. The Equity Scorecard® asks that institutions turn the mirror to themselves rather than blame students for equity gaps. The Equity Scorecard® also introduces new language and tools to enable teams of faculty and staff talk about race less defensively.<sup>1</sup>

I think we have lots of good examples of data being used to help facilitate inquiry processes that then create customized change interventions for a local context. For example, one campus might have said, “We think it is this first-year experience course that will help with retention,” prior to examining the data. But when they actually collected the data, the campus may have

found that it diverged from the national trend, and it was losing students primarily in the third semester, so that’s where their intervention needs to be focused, right?

**National initiatives support data-based inquiry and change as an ongoing process.** We have a lot of this wisdom out there about things to support student success, but unless we look at our own data and find out exactly where and when the problems are we going to come up with better changes and interventions to support them. For community colleges, Achieving the Dream™ has integrated ideas about using data and inquiry, and creating cultures of inquiry on campus. We are seeing quite a lot of support in a lot of national projects for data use and inquiry driven models to support ongoing learning and change.

One of the most significant outcomes of these projects is that they instill the notion that change is an ongoing phenomenon. Too often, people want to ‘get change over with,’ once the change is enacted, change is over for good. These national projects make us think that we need to use the data to check in and think about what are the ongoing continuous changes that we need to be making, and how do we need to continue to learn about our effectiveness and how we’re performing as institutions so that we can make our work better. That is one of the very strong upsides to many data-inquiry projects that have sprung up.

**LASOTA:** What are the steps in the Equity Scorecard® process and any other strategies that are effective in addressing equity concerns between traditionally advantaged and underserved student populations, when we are deliberating about scaling up innovations in community colleges?

**KEZAR:** The Equity Scorecard® is a research-driven change model with several stages.

**Cross-Functional Team Formation.** The Equity Scorecard® process starts with putting together a team, so it brings together ideas I shared about collaboration to support ongoing learning. Furthermore, the process assembles teams that have expertise across the campus within various areas — student affairs, academic affairs, institutional research if it exists, or the person who is responsible for data at the community college, such as an administrator or faculty member or two, and others with different expertise across the campus who are tasked with collecting relevant data and given the specific charge to identify equity gaps.

**Data Examination.** The process begins by first looking at the data to see what data we have and how can we look at it in ways that help us understand if there are equity gaps. We may suspect differences between racial and ethnic groups in accessing services and responding to interventions, and learn about the nature of those gaps. What we learn may be different than our original hunches. So, we may have ideas, but we need to challenge those ideas with data and evidence. Maybe we think that women are not performing well in STEM disciplines,

<sup>1</sup> [http://cue.usc.edu/our\\_tools/the\\_equity\\_scorecard.html](http://cue.usc.edu/our_tools/the_equity_scorecard.html)

but it is really students of color. So, how do we really look at data to move beyond our assumptions to really understand what equity issues are there, based on student pathways and how students are actually performing?

**Intervention Design.** Because team members come from multiple places across campus, the team examines different questions and helps introduce different ways we might look at equity. Once the team uses data to identify problems areas related to equity, then the team can generate meaningful interventions based on the data analysis. Without the diverse team structure, often a faculty member will lean towards saying “Well, here’s how I could change my class,” and someone in student affairs will say, “Here is the kind of advising or support that might be needed.” With a diverse team decision-making structure, you are likely to have a more multi-faceted intervention that comes from people who are placed throughout the institution. Then, this team is better equipped to answer: What are the likely best institutional changes that will support achieving greater equity for all of our students? And the changes will likely be more than changes in a single class or approach to advising.

**Self-Assessment.** The Equity Scorecard® process builds in an assessment of the intervention itself to see if it works. This is a data-driven evaluation with the intervention, which involves continuous collection of data, to answer the question of how did the intervention make a difference? If students of color were not performing well in STEM disciplines, over time, did we find out that, during or after the interventions, that more students of color are succeeding? The process asks: Are the interventions working or do they need to be tweaked? The Equity Scorecard® model includes a continuous look at data to continue to tweak and make ongoing changes.

**LASOTA:** Say you were to scale-up without the continuous data collection or grounded understanding of equity gaps in certain outcomes that drove the intervention in an Equity Scorecard® or similar process, what would be the pitfall of scaling up an intervention without using such a process?

**KEZAR: Without an equity-minded, data-inquiry process to guide scale-up of interventions in higher education, you risk exerting a great deal of time and effort on solutions to the wrong problems, and may find no change in the desired outcome.**

Let’s say, for example, that we think women are not performing in STEM, and then we create a child care center. And we look to see if there are curriculum changes to address gender gaps in STEM course performance, but the real problem is race. These interventions are not necessarily going to help. The interventions may to some degree help women of color, because they represent part of that subset affected by gender-based interventions. But there will be a mismatch between the intervention and the population that you are trying to help.

Sometimes a generic strategy might help. But you may not have the most appropriate intervention needed to substantially address the barrier to increased STEM course performance. Let’s say the root cause of poor STEM course performance is math performance, and that has not been addressed at all. So, the STEM course performance success rates do not go up, and the intervention ends up being a failure. You find that when you go back and look at the data, not much has changed.

So, you will have put a lot of time and effort into an intervention without the desired effect. I have to say, that we do this a lot in higher education (put in place the wrong changes). One major downside to this is that leaders lose support. This is because change takes a lot of time and effort, for the desired effect not to materialize. If faculty and staff invest a lot of time and effort and then they do not get any result, they become cynical and they don’t want to change in the future. They see that while they invested a lot, it did not have any kind of desired outcome.

**LASOTA:** How is the process of scaling in higher education related to the generation of social movements? Could you share some of your thinking about social movements and how they relate to scale-up?

**KEZAR: Social movements come about when there is internal motivation around particular kinds of changes in higher education.** An example of this is found in the expansion of undergraduate research programs in the United States. Ten or 15 years ago, there were just a handful of undergraduate research programs and now there are well over a thousand programs. Undergraduate research is also growing at community colleges, even though it is more prevalent at research universities, where students may have greater access to ongoing research projects. There is a national organization now for undergraduate research, and resources for community colleges to develop their undergraduate research programs.<sup>2</sup>

In addition to the example of service learning which I gave in the *Innovation in Higher Education* article, **undergraduate research is another example of a social movement that spread in higher education.** I could identify many social movements where faculty and staff are internally motivated to change something that is really helpful for students. With undergraduate research, faculty and staff see the opportunity for intensive mentoring with students. People got excited about how much more students can learn when they have direct access to faculty in research, and are involved in an inquiry process, such as problem-based learning.

When there are people who are internally motivated at our institutions, you can find a groundswell for a particular idea, practice, or theory of education. You find that people get excited

<sup>2</sup> See the Council on Undergraduate Research, Programs for Community Colleges: [http://www.cur.org/projects\\_and\\_services/special\\_projects/community\\_colleges/](http://www.cur.org/projects_and_services/special_projects/community_colleges/)

about something, and bring it to their professional societies and talk about it with colleagues. Let's say in one region, you may have several community colleges that get excited about a particular approach to advising or a service learning program. They are motivated to adopt a particular innovation or change, and they help spread it themselves. It is more powerful when faculty and staff can tell the story of how important this practice is to the students they work with, and how much that it transforms their understanding of how much students can learn.

**LASOTA:** What role do professional networks play in supporting widespread implementation of innovations in community colleges? What are some recommended strategies for engaging in networks to develop and sustain good processes for deliberation and discussion of innovations in community colleges?

**KEZAR:** Professional networks can be a way to become part of the change initiatives that are happening throughout higher education. Within community colleges, the professional networks and associations have impact but often a lesser impact than would be optimal because there is not oftentimes funding to support going to professional conferences. But on community college campuses in particular, I see a lot of locally developed networks, and sometimes these occur in learning communities.

I visited a lot of community college campuses where they got excited about rethinking mentoring or a particular pedagogical approach and they starting meeting as a group. In some cases, the college's center for teaching and learning brings people together. Other times, a group of faculty or staff were excited about a particular topic or program and decide to meet over lunch. They bring their brown bag lunches, talk over lunch time. They form their own internal networks, based on their passion, and they want to talk with others about those same kinds of ideas.

**At many community college campuses, I've seen a lot of faculty and staff that want to support first-generation college students.** They all say, "We care about this and each of us have different ideas, so let's meet and talk about the ways we might learn from different experiences we've had and what we can read in common about first-generation college students." They form their own local network, which then helps them think about and create a bottom-up initiative to support first-generation college students on their campus.

**LASOTA:** As another example, in what way is the growth of service learning programs representative of effective models of scaling in higher education?

**Service learning spread as people worked together to create the network to support implementation, and this is an illustrative example of scale-up.** One of the reasons that I followed service learning was that it was an example to counter those that would say to me, "Higher education doesn't change." I asked, "How come in 1992 there were 30 service learning

programs in the country and now there are more than 3,000? And a lot of them in community colleges where they did not exist before? No one mandated this, and it's not because of state policy. So, how did this happen?" We can look at examples like this throughout higher education.

**Thoughtful Leadership.** The leaders that were interested in scaling up service learning were thoughtful in recognizing that there were certain things that would facilitate the spread of service learning. They did not want service learning to happen at one campus or another. They thought it would be a powerful pedagogy for every student, or that it could be. But they knew that it might look different on a community college campus versus a research university. So, one of the things that you will need if you want to have something be adapted for a local environment is to have the discussion about: "What might service learning look like on our campus?"

**Many Forums for Networking.** State and national leaders convened conferences, and there were locally generated collaborative discussions on campuses. Colleges also obtained funding to bring faculty or staff from regional or national conferences to talk about what are some of the ways that we might integrating this into different disciplines? Because it will look different in sociology than it does in biology, than it would be in religion. There are many different ways to implement service learning, and it would need to be modified for different disciplines.

**Ongoing Dialogue.** There is an ongoing dialogue about service learning as a pedagogy and what might it look like. How do we build in assessment? How do we examine the success of different service learning programs and be able to tweak and modify, to add to our earlier conversation about the importance of data? Campus Compact<sup>3</sup> leaders relied on regional and statewide networks to spread ideas and support lone innovators. State and national intermediaries in the Campus Compact saw that, too often, that someone was interested in service learning, and was one of the only people in their discipline on their campus and that being isolated like that, would prevent them from operating. So, how do you break the isolation with new practices and connect people, so that if I'm at one community college, I could find another person at a nearby college doing the same thing that I am?

**Awards and Incentives.** Service learning leaders also knew that people were going to be on campuses that didn't necessarily provide the support to try these innovations, so they thought about ways for the campus compact to create awards and incentives, and even seed funding so that service learning could spread. Service learning leaders thought out what were the kinds of internal discussions needed, relationships that need to be built, and even data and assessment, as well as rewards, that would bring this to scale over time, which all occurred.

<sup>3</sup> See the Campus Compact website: <http://www.compact.org/>

**LASOTA:** Given what you know about higher education finance and the fiscal constraints in community colleges, what are your thoughts about incentives, awards, and available funding to effectively bring innovations to scale in community colleges?

**KEZAR:** **Awards and recognition go a long way to support the spread of innovations.** Leaders are often surprised when they offer awards and recognition at how far it will go in motivating change. This is a way to start building support for adopting a change in practice, rather than saying “There’s no money for that so we may as well forget it.” There is an underlying assumption that if we don’t have money or funding for something, that we may as well not pursue it. I try to disabuse people of it, because funding does not turn up a significant factor in my work on scaling-up change. When we think of incentives, we need to think much more broadly about it. Sometimes if we don’t have direct funding and there are still costs, we can think about ways that we can leverage existing projects and funding, seek small investments and donations, and be more creative about funding and incentives.

Internal motivation is always intrinsically stronger at getting sustained and authentic change at scale, than external motivation. It’s getting people involved and excited about something from the bottom-up. You don’t have to pay people to have brown bag conversations about how to serve first-generation students better, to return to my previous example. If they are internally motivated, they will do it. There are times when people are not excited about making a change. There is a change that is necessary and people are not excited about it. That’s when it’s harder, because the internal motivation is not there.

That’s when leaders have to say, is there any way we can connect this initiative with something that is internally motivating to people? For example, administrators may wish to push a technology major and there is not strong interest among the faculty. That’s when a leader may invite someone to come in from the business community to talk about how this would really help first-generation students because there is a growing job market, to build upon the natural interest people have in helping first-generation students succeed. I would try to connect the new change or innovation that does not have much initial support, with something that faculty and staff do care about.

**LASOTA:** Amidst the culture of independence and competition in higher education, what are some ways to address and think about scale-up?

**KEZAR:** **The culture of independence was partially addressed in my comments about service leaning and how creating networks overcomes isolation and lack of community.** The issues of independence and faculty believing no one should tell them what to do in their classroom is challenging. The move away from tenure at most institutions means this issue is shifting. Learning communities and data intervention teams do break down the culture of independence, but it certainly remains a challenge that leaders should be aware of.

**Higher education institutions can use competition to generate enthusiasm and motivation for change.** In higher education, a lot of attention is paid to ranking and measuring institutions. We have in built into the culture of the academy a sense of competing to be the best. That can often be used to create change. However, internal competition may be more effective than the external competition, because there is oftentimes too much focus on the ranking of institutions, which is unhealthy. A little sense of your own internal drive to compete to be better can be created or fostered to facilitate change.

**Data-based inquiry and the internal motivation to change and improve as an organization are strong catalysts for change.** In my work, I have noticed examples of leaders leveraging competition to stimulate change, particularly in my study with the National Survey on Student Engagement (NSSE)<sup>4</sup> on documenting effective educational practices. Institutions that were striving to change the most and have the best environments for students were ones that were restless, that never felt that they were good enough. These institutions had a sense that they had to keep improving and not ever being satisfied that they were good enough. Competition may not drive the restlessness, per se. Lots of these campuses engaged in the NSSE research were data- and inquiry-based, and that did help them to think of learning as ongoing, and change as ongoing, as well as not feeling complacent with being good enough.

**LASOTA:** How do we foster sustainability of innovations and move them forward in the best interests of students?

**KEZAR:** **Sustained changes are ones that have bottom-up investment and bottom-up ownership.** We need as a culture to buy into a set of things that we commit to over time, rather than flip-flopping on new agendas based on the flavor of the month. What’s important is sustaining a few initiatives that are meaningful that support students’ success. We’ve had a history of half-integrated, half-owned kinds of changes. The leadership for the future and the kind of changes that will help our enterprise are those which are collectively owned by both the bottom-up and top-down. Scaling-up will be more effective through a commitment to a sustainable core set of meaningful changes.

**LASOTA:** What research has most informed your thoughts on scale-up?

**KEZAR:** While I highlight Richard Elmore in the *Innovation in Higher Education* article because he has conducted many large-scale studies over a long period of time, I’ve been informed more broadly than the researchers I cited in the article. Initially, I was informed by the work of Bob Birnbaum, Bill Tierney, and Estela Bensimon. In examining higher education, they have always demonstrated, through empirical research, the importance of looking at both local context and culture, as well

<sup>4</sup> See: <http://nsse.iub.edu/>

as the nature of the organization—higher education being a unique enterprise—shaping processes and issues. I have a deep gratitude to all three for their thinking. Fundamentally, these scholars challenged whether you can take principles from other literatures wholesale and apply them to higher education. You really need to think about the context of higher education and, furthermore, the specific institutional context, such as community colleges. I have always resonated with the importance of local context and culture, as an important principle particularly for change. They also all avoid silver-bullet thinking. Change is messy and complex. People generally don't like to hear that, but that is what I have witnessed and studied. ♦

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leadership in higher education and her research agenda explores the change process in higher education institutions and the role of leadership in creating change. Dr. Kezar is also a well-known qualitative researcher and has written several texts and articles about ways to improve qualitative research in education. Kezar is well published with 14 books, over 75 journal articles, and over a hundred book chapters and reports. In 2011, she had two new books: *Recognizing and Serving Low Income Students* (Routledge, 2011) and *Enhancing Campus Capacity for Leadership* (Stanford Press, 2011). She has acquired over \$5 million dollars in grant funding and has worked on grant-funded projects exceeding \$12 million dollars on a variety of projects to fundamentally improve higher education. She is currently Vice President of Division J (Postsecondary Education) of the American Educational Research Association, and has held many leadership roles in educational research associations. See: <http://www.usc.edu/dept/chepa/kezar/> for more information. She can be reached at [kezar@usc.edu](mailto:kezar@usc.edu).

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## Pathways to Results Conference Highlight: *Examining the Context for Scaling Up in Higher Education* with Marcy Drummond



Highlights of keynote presentation by Marcy Drummond, Senior Program Officer, Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.

Link to Video: <https://vimeo.com/89704867>

Link to Presentation Slides PDF: <http://occrillinois.edu/projects/pathways/scaling-up-2014/>

At OCCRL's Pathways to Results Conference on March 5, 2014, Marcy Drummond highlighted the work of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation in promoting promising practices for scale-up in the area of postsecondary success. The Foundation's goal in postsecondary education is to "ensure adults have affordable access to a quality postsecondary education that is tailored to their individual needs and educational goals and leads to timely completion of a degree or certificate with labor-market value." Ms. Drummond's presentation offers framing information about the changing context for scaling-up innovation in higher education. The postsecondary success strategy of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation has the vision of a U.S. higher education system that "propels social mobility and economic development."

### Rationale for Investing in Postsecondary Education

"Realizing this vision begins by ensuring that all students graduate from high school with the skills they need to succeed at college-level work or in a career," Ms. Drummond implored. Over the past 40 years, educational policies and practices have emphasized increasing college enrollment and access, and U.S. data show substantial improvements (NCES, 2013). "The percentage of students going to 2- or 4-year colleges and universities directly from high school increased from less than half in 1975 to almost two-thirds in 2001, with the biggest gains among female and low-income students. In fact, more than 80% of high school graduates will enroll in some kind of postsecondary education within eight years of their high school graduation," Ms. Drummond remarked.

Furthermore, college enrollment gaps by racial and ethnic groups have narrowed. Based on NCES Fast Facts (2013), “The focus on access has had a positive impact on students from all ethnicities and by 2011 the proportion of Latino, African American, and Asian/Pacific Islanders who attended college was equal to or greater than their share of the total population. 14.3% of new college students were Latino (equivalent to their share of the overall population), 15.1% of new students were African American (more than the overall share of the population), 6.3% were Asian/Pacific Islanders (greater than their overall share of the population).”

However, the economic returns from postsecondary education occur from completing credentials, not just enrollment in college. Ms. Drummond explained that the economic returns to the individual occur to employment occur at “every rung up the educational ladder, for those who have not completed high school to those who earn a professional graduate degree, (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2014).” U.S. labor market projections also warrant additional postsecondary educational training (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2013). “Over the past third of a century, all of the net job growth in the U.S. has been in occupations that require at least some postsecondary education,” Ms. Drummond explained. She emphasized that postsecondary educational degree completion is particularly important for young adults. Citing the Harvard Graduate School of Education (2011), Ms. Drummond noted that “the Great Recession caused a 17% drop in employment for this age group making it increasingly difficult for youth to find an alternative pathway to success through the labor market other than through completing a postsecondary credential.”

### **Changing Context of Higher Education and the U.S. Workforce Deficit**

While the economic and social needs for postsecondary education are greater than ever before, “the United States now has the highest college dropout rate in the industrialized world,” according to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (2013). Ms. Drummond noted the nation’s “college completion crisis” in that only 58% of students in 4-year institutions graduate “on time” (bachelor’s degree on-time rate calculated at six years), and fewer than 30% of students in 2-year institutions earn an associate’s degree “on-time” (calculated at three years) (OECD, 2013). Another aspect of the college completion crisis is that low-income students disproportionately do not earn their degrees. Ms. Drummond cited the National Center for Education Statistics’ 2012 study, *Higher Education: Gaps in Access and Persistence*, which found that although low-income students represented 26% of enrollment, they only represented 18% of all those that attained a degree. The study reported that the odds of completing a degree program for students in the highest income quartile was twice that of those in the lowest income quartile.

Ms. Drummond also pointed out that the postsecondary education student population is dramatically changing. The majority of college students are “non-traditional.” Many students are working and raising families while attending school, and often attending part-time. Citing Richard Settersten and Barbara Ray’s *What’s going on with young people today: The long and twisted path to adulthood* (2010), Ms. Drummond emphasized that families are increasingly overburdened by the needs of their young adult children and finding existing institutional supports insufficient to support young adults’ “long and twisted” path to adulthood.

Ms. Drummond explained that “longer transitions into adulthood and a new population of college students being served by an educational model that doesn’t adequately address their changing needs has resulted in the postsecondary completion crises.” And the completion crisis is occurring at the same time a greater number of educated workers are needed for U.S. economic recovery and prosperity, she reported. She cited research by Anthony P. Carnevale from Georgetown University who reported that by 2020 we’ll be at least 5 million graduates short of what the U.S. needs to remain competitive (Carnevale, Smith, & Strohl, 2013). Another report, *Winning by Degrees* (2010), further estimated that the U.S. needs to produce 1 million more graduates each year—40 percent more than today. This translates to an increased production of degree holders by 3.5% per year for the next decade.<sup>1</sup>

### **Evolution to a Cohesive Postsecondary and Workforce Ecosystem**

Drawing from trends in student enrollment, labor market projections, and data on college completion, Ms. Drummond then shared a vision for a new, cohesive postsecondary and workforce ecosystem. She explained that, “In addition to long and varied learner transitions, learning is also taking place in diverse venues.” Ms. Drummond cited data from national longitudinal studies that has looked at how students actually attend college over the last decade revealing high levels of transfer among postsecondary institutions, with two-thirds of all students who eventually earn a baccalaureate degree having attended two or more colleges or universities (Adelman, 2006). Additionally, she pointed out that “investment in postsecondary education and training reveals that only 35% is spent in formal 2- and 4-year colleges, the remaining, 65% is invested in learning experiences occurring in workplaces such as apprenticeships, on-the-job training programs, and other venues such as the military, or in volunteer experiences (Carnevale, Smith, & Strohl, 2013). Enrollment in online education has quintupled since 2002 and recent studies have found that as much as 31% of the higher education enrollment

<sup>1</sup> See Knowledge Center at <http://knowledgecenter.completionbydesign.org/resource/387>

is in online courses (Parsad & Lewis, 2008). Moreover, studies of the millennial I generation (ages 18 to 29) now enrolling in college demonstrates a preference toward customized, blended learning experiences that allow learners to integrate life and learning (Sandeen, 2008).”

Ms. Drummond invited everyone to “imagine if students could easily move from high school to college, between colleges, and, if needed, in and out of postsecondary education and work- gathering credentials along the way so they could pick up where they left off, or better yet scaffold all of their learning experiences in pursuit of completing career-building degrees or certificates...” She posed the question: “What if we built a robust learning and learner-centric education and workforce system that focus on the shared definition, validation, and transference of learning outcomes that reflect learners’ knowledge, skills, abilities, and experiences enabling them to aggregate all of learning experiences--regardless of provider and modality--to obtain postsecondary credentials and sustainable employment?”

Her presentation concluded with a wide range of examples and practices in higher education institutions across the country that could be scaled as part of this emerging, modern, and cohesive ecosystem. Ms. Drummond highlighted “ways that educational providers and business and industry associations are coming together to posit a new equation, one that adds up to increased credential completion that results in equitable and sustainable employment.” She provided many illustrative examples that can be viewed in the video or in the PDF of presentation slides at <http://ocrl.illinois.edu/projects/pathways/scaling-up-2014/>. ♦

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## Perspectives on Scaling Up from Three OCCRL Initiatives

1. Trade Adjustment Assistance Community College and Career Training (TAACCCT)
2. Transformative Change Initiative (TCI)
3. Credit When It's Due (CWID)



*Marianne Krismer*

### TAACCCT: An Interview with H2P Consortium Director Dr. Marianne Krismer

*by Donna Tonini, OCCRL Research Specialist*



*Donna Tonini*

Although the idea of scaling-up innovations and initiatives resonates strongly in higher education, the practice of bringing such change to scale is not without its challenges. In Jobs for the Future's *Thinking Big* report (2013)<sup>1</sup>, the authors note that despite the prevalence of innovative programs in education, the adoption of effective programs and practices appears to be limited. Kezar (2011) highlights research that demonstrates the difficulties of sustaining replicated interventions, and critiques the inattention to adapting innovations for local settings and contexts. Kezar outlines three key elements: deliberation and discussion, networks, and external supports and incentives, which are necessary to "diffuse innovation and beneficial change within higher education circles," yet often found to be lacking in scale-up models (2011, p. 243-244). Yet in light of these hurdles, there is not only a growing demand to scale promising practices and innovations, but also within the education funding community, there is an amplified call for institutions of higher learning to be accountable for sustaining widespread change.

This commitment to scaling-up is evident within President Obama's pledge to provide a "down payment" for community colleges to enable them to reform and enhance programs and services in order to improve their effectiveness and impact (2009). Obama's investment in community colleges comes in the form of the U.S. Department of Labor's (DOL) Trade Adjustment Assistance Community College and Career Training (TAACCCT) \$2 billion grant, which provides funding to community colleges to develop programs of study and student support strategies that prepare participants to "acquire the skills, degrees and credentials needed for high-wage, high skill employment" in advanced manufacturing, transportation, health care, and STEM occupations (DOL, 2011, p. 1). Through

the TAACCCT grant, the DOL provides funds to community colleges to prepare U.S. citizens for industry-recognized, accredited, and nationally portable postsecondary credentials. However, this funding award is contingent not only upon the colleges' ability to meet the priorities of the DOL but also their capacity "to focus on education and training that can be taken to scale beyond a community level to reach significant numbers of diverse students over a larger geographic area" (2011, p. 7).

OCCRL serves as third-party evaluator for a Round-One TAACCCT co-grantee that has embedded scaling up into its core strategies and programs of study. Led by Cincinnati State Technical and Community College, the Healthcare Professions Pathways (H2P) Consortium includes nine community colleges which seek to improve training in the health professions. OCCRL recently had the opportunity to talk to Dr. Marianne Krismer, the national director of the H2P Consortium, to glean insight into H2P's efforts to scale up its TAACCCT-funded strategies and programs of study and "galvanize a national movement" in health care training programs. This article draws on Dr. Krismer's experiences and perspectives to elucidate H2P's successes and implementation challenges regarding scaling up innovations, and to provide guidance to other institutions that endeavor to bring their own programs and practices to scale.

Opening the conversation, Dr. Krismer stated the main goal of the H2P Consortium is to increase the capacity of community colleges to enable individuals to earn credentials and degrees and become employed. "We are looking to change how health education is delivered, and ultimately impact the communities that we serve, through changing the pathway... to foster increased retention, credential attainment, and stackability of credentials that lead to employment." Through the TAACCCT grant, H2P proposed to address the priorities of the DOL by implementing eight strategies:

1. Online assessment and enhanced career guidance
2. Contextualized developmental education
3. Competency-based core curriculum
4. Industry-recognized stackable credentials

<sup>1</sup> *Thinking Big: A Framework for States on Scaling Up Community College Innovation*. By Rose Asera, Rachel Pleasants McDonnell, and Lisa Soricone, with Nate Anderson and Barbara Endel. July 2013. Online at: <http://www.jff.org/publications/thinking-big-framework-states-scaling-community-college-innovation>.

5. Enhanced retention support
6. Training programs for incumbent health professions workers
7. Enhanced data and accountability systems
8. Galvanize a national movement

Committed to implementing strategies focusing on accelerating students' progress through programs and career pathways, Dr. Krismer explained that H2P adopted the eighth strategy, "galvanize a national movement," to scale their efforts nationally to improve health education. The key innovation that H2P is scaling is the development of a national model for competency-based core curriculum, in concert with the other embedded strategies which comprise the components of their envisioned pathway. "What we are attempting to do is to identify those competencies that are core to multiple health programs and then to offer courses [to create] some type of competency-based credential in the future that would be recognized nationally... and that is also stackable and meaningful to the employer."

Dr. Krismer highlighted key points in H2P's approach to scaling their national model for competency-based core curriculum. First, the Consortium leveraged the expertise of one of its members, El Centro College in Dallas, Texas, which spent several years developing and implementing a core curriculum model for its own institution. As "subject matter experts," El Centro engages with each of the other consortium colleges, in what Dr. Krismer terms a "laboratory" setting, to provide the technical assistance necessary to allow the colleges to implement the different components of core curriculum according to their needs and timeframe. Another important aspect of H2P's approach involves "embracing partnerships with our local Workforce Investment Board and also, most importantly, the employers, so that we are developing our pathways in concert with the needs within our communities."

To that end, at the onset of the grant, H2P set up a national advisory council of 25 members, which represent a wide range of health care employers and education groups that provide feedback and validation of the core curriculum. "We knew that we had to utilize our partnerships, which we did, to expand and reach out." Moreover, H2P colleges actively worked toward expanding their networks even further, with Dr. Krismer's elections to the Boards of the Hospice and Palliative Nurses Association and the National Network of Health Career Programs in Two-Year Colleges, as well as the American National Standards Institute, an organization that promotes the importance of credentialing and entry level healthcare careers. H2P meets with these groups to plan "how we can work collaboratively" and determine what they can do to "bring folks to the table to start making a concerted effort to develop a national model." These efforts point out how important the partnership piece is to H2P in sharing the core curriculum strategy and advancing the national movement.

Further elaborating on H2P's approach to scaling, Dr. Krismer added that yet another strategic move made by H2P was to

secure national recognition and additional funding support for their scaling efforts through the Clinton Global Initiative. This new grant provides the resources necessary for H2P colleges to partner with at least one new community college with whom they will actively engage in scaling core curriculum, with the goal of "scaling this to 100 community colleges by 2016." H2P is broadening this movement of scaling core curriculum further still by engaging in widely renowned scaling forums such as the Transformative Change Initiative and the Scaling Up Pathways to Results conference where they engage in national conversations regarding implementing, sustaining, and scaling change to improve student outcomes and college performance (Bragg et al., 2014). There is evidence that this conversation is indeed resonating at the national level. Last year, H2P was successfully written into a TAACCCT Round Three Grant with Los Angeles Trade Technical College (LATTC)—a consortium with nine community colleges. According to Dr. Krismer, it is LATTC's first association with the national movement, and with the funding assistance from TAACCCT, H2P will be enabled to host additional scaling forums to help "extend the natural life of the H2P Consortium."

The approach that H2P is using to scale its core curriculum strategy closely mirrors Kezar's (2011) aforementioned framework of three key mechanisms of change. First, Dr. Krismer expounded on the national conversation that H2P is bringing to multiple stakeholders in the scaling up process. From working with secondary schools, to community colleges outside of their network, to employers and Workforce Investment Boards, H2P is "engaging in activities that create discussion among change agents" (Kezar, 2011, p. 244). In addition to deliberation and discussion, H2P is also leveraging its growing array of networks to "spread information necessary to implement the change, helping sustain the change over the long term" (Kezar, 2011, p. 245). Finally, H2P is also successfully pursuing external supports and incentives, "obtaining endorsement or support from governments, foundations, and existing intermediary organizations that influence the system" (Kezar, 2011, p. 245).

Similar to Dr. Kezar, Dr. Krismer emphasized the importance of leadership in building teams, reaching consensus, and achieving outcomes. While she recognized the need for core leadership provided by a director, Dr. Krismer acknowledged the need for multiple leaders. "I feel like I am a leader among leaders. You have to empower everybody you can to continue to focus on how each individual community college, each individual participant is involved in the scaling." Dr. Krismer alluded to the need for these multiple leaders and support systems in overcoming the challenges posed by taking initiatives to scale. By fostering continuous discussion, engaging and growing their networks, securing external support, and employing solid leadership, H2P has been able to gain purchase on their toughest scaling challenge, which is "just getting folks on board without literally dismissing the constant flow of 'been there, done that, tried it, it doesn't work'." In light of this resistance, Dr. Krismer noted it is essential to find champions in order to achieve the strategies and reach the goals within the scaling

plan. “Working together will bring about change, but it is not easy. There are many, many barriers, but the opportunities are even greater, so that is why we continue to work and try to work smart and strategically.”

To conclude, Dr. Krismer provided a list of recommendations for other community colleges that seek to scale innovations and initiatives:

First, be very clear about what you want to scale, what your objectives are, and have them be reasonable and measurable. Identify who your champions are, because as a consortium leader, I cannot do it by myself. Identify who your key partners will be and really seek ones that have national reach. Regional partners are important, but the more folks who have a national reach, the easier it will be to scale this on a national level. Also, think about the methodology that you want to scale. Communication is always an issue when you are doing anything on a national level, so identify forums where people assemble. Then finally, get involved. My role is to promote the scaling, and focus on identifying organizations we need to be attached to... as there is an alignment with their particular mission and goals.

Dr. Krismer shared that there will be ebbs and flows in the work, but “stick with it, keep your eye on the prize, keep your eye on the goal, and good things will happen. Maybe not what you intended, but good things will happen.” In the words of Dr. Krismer, these grants can support powerful and meaningful work, and these wonderful innovations can lead to positive outcomes and opportunities.

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## Transformative Change Initiative (TCI): Guiding Principles from TCI about Scaling Up

by Professor and OCCRL Director, Debra D. Bragg, PhD

In 2012, the Office of Community College Research and Leadership (OCCRL) and The Collaboratory partnered to create the Transformative Change Initiative (TCI), which strives to assist community colleges and their partners to scale guided pathways, programs of study, and evidence-based strategies. Naming the initiative “transformative change” was a bold yet deliberate decision to scale innovations that produce unprecedented results without sacrificing the hallmark commitment community colleges have made to access and opportunity. Community colleges that engage in TCI are expected to innovate in ways that change systems to better serve all learners, and especially learners historically underserved by higher education.

The impetus for TCI was the Trade Adjustment Assistance Community College and Career Training (TAACCCT) grant program. Beginning in 2011, the U.S. Department of Labor began awarding a total of nearly \$500 million per year to single institutions or consortia of colleges that implement pathways, programs of study, and evidence-based strategies that are intended to improve postsecondary education—access as well as completion and credentialing—as well as employment and workforce performance. Through highly competitive 3- or 4-year grants, community colleges that have received TAACCCT grants are expected to recruit and assist Trade Adjustment Act (TAA)-eligible workers and other adults to

acquire the skills and credentials needed for family living-wage employment (U.S. Department of Labor, Employment and Training Administration, 2013).

Presently, the TCI Network reaches over 230 community colleges throughout the nation who are implementing TAACCCT grants. Already, the TCI Network involves an estimated half of the community colleges funded by TAACCCT grants in the nation and about one-quarter of all the community colleges in the United States. With TAACCCT grants continuing to be awarded, the TCI Network will continue grow and eventually the initiative will expand beyond TAACCCT to envelop a wide range of initiatives that share the goal of better educating students and preparing them for family living-wage employment.

OCCRL and The Collaboratory would not have been able to do this work without the generous support of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and the Lumina Foundation. The TCI initiative also receives funding from the Joyce Foundation, with The Collaboratory leading efforts to engage practitioners in professional development, leadership development, and communities of practice that help to support scaling.

## Scaling Transformative Change

What do we mean by scaling transformative change? Jeanne Century, a leading researcher on STEM education at the University of Chicago, impressed TCI Evaluation Collaborative members with her thoughtful insights on the complexities of scaling. Dr. Century observed that whereas scaling can be incredibly complex, two dimensions define the concept in very important ways: spread and endurance. *Spread* refers to scaling within an organization or with other organizations; it is about the breadth of the change. Is the change intended to spread within the organization that originated it, or is it intended to spread to other organizations? Setting realistic goals and being intentional about spreading an innovation is important to achieving meaningful results (Century, 2013; Century, Rudnick, & Freeman, 2010).

*Endurance* is about how long an innovation will last and what processes are needed to ensure the proposed longevity. Dr. Century observed that few changes of substance in education come about quickly, so long-term plans are necessary for change to endure. The more substantial and complex the innovation, the longer it will take to scale it. This is because integrating change into an organization's structures, processes, and culture requires time, sometimes many years. According to Dr. Century, adaptation is key to endurance because most innovations acclimate to the local context over time, not immediately. Acclimation is required for long-term endurance.

Kathleen Enright, the president and CEO of Grantmakers for Effective Organizations, spoke to the TCI Network at the Scaling Forum in June 2013, and she made a strong case for the notion that scaling is really about *growing impact*. From

Ms. Enright's perspective, scaling isn't so much about changing to do things better but about changing to do better things to produce greater impact. In the educational context, greater impact is about improving student outcomes, raising program performance, and increasing social impact. In the context of TCI, scaling innovation is about growing impact for all learners.

## The Transformative Change Initiative Framework

An important goal of TCI is to assist community colleges to scale innovation, and we are committed to the use of guiding principles to implement and evaluate scaling. By using guiding principles, TCI provides direction for practitioners to scale without overwhelming them with prescription. Guiding principles represent the intentionality of the innovation in ways that allow for multiple actors and actions to take place and bring about change. The beauty of guiding principles is that they provide "guidance for action in the face of complexity" (Patton, 2011) and as a result, adaptation can occur in ways that achieve the intended outcome in the local context. Guiding principles also reflect the underlying knowledge and beliefs that guide actions necessary to sustain change and grow impact.

TCI's theory of change suggests scaling happens when practitioners act intentionally to set goals, implement changes, and measure intended outcomes. A cycle of learning and change is ignited for the betterment of students, stakeholders, and society. From this perspective, practitioners and other stakeholders reflect upon and share what they believe to be good practice, and these practices shape and re-shape the evolving local context. Contrary to some traditional views of scaling, this way of thinking is not so much about replicating what others assert is good practice but about engaging in and becoming an instrument of the scaling process itself (Schorr, 2012).

The seven guiding principles that frame the scaling of transformative change follow:

### **Guiding Principle 1: Transformative leaders implement, sustain, and scale transformative change that benefits all learners.**

Leaders who engage in transformative change come from many backgrounds and represent many perspectives. Top-down leadership that is associated with formal administrative roles is important, but so is bottom-up leadership. Ultimately, leadership to scale innovation isn't so much about lines of authority as it is about the ideas and actions that individuals put forth to generate new understandings of, enthusiasm for, and commitment to change (Fullan, 2011). Developing a thoughtful plan sets scale-up activities on a promising trajectory by creating a vision for change, assessing the potential for scaling to be successful, gathering needed information about audiences and contexts, and preparing stakeholders to engage in scaling processes (Cooley & Ved, 2012). The notion of transformative leadership (Shields, 2010) suggests leaders are agents of change who are acutely aware of diverse learners' aspirations to access

education, to participate fully and successfully in learning, and to achieve desired outcomes. Transformative leaders are advocates for access, equity, and outcomes for all students, especially student populations that have not had access to higher education in the past. Leaders who are committed to transformative change assume heightened responsibilities for the dual goal of enhancing equity and improving student outcomes.

**Guiding Principle 2: Adoption and adaptation are key to implementing, sustaining, and scaling innovations.**

The classic idea for scaling innovation calls for replication, meaning implementation consistent with an innovation that was tested in another setting. Whereas the simplicity of this idea is attractive—follow the recipe, fix the problem—many scholars and practitioners question whether replication is feasible or effective in complex settings. Certainly, community colleges that have multiple missions, diverse learners, comprehensive curricula, and different funding streams more than qualify as complex organizations. Therefore, practitioners in these colleges need to pay as much (or more) attention to how an innovation needs to adapt to fit the local context as to how to replicate with fidelity. Schorr (2012) argues that innovations last if they are carefully contextualized to the locations where they are implemented. She recommends that practitioners recognize how the local context influences implementation; how to use data to understand what is working and what is not; and how patterns of implementing, measuring, learning, and adapting are repeated over time. Her thoughts align with Kotter (2008), whose theory of organization change emphasizes a sense of urgency, communication of a vision, and cultural context to transformative change. Chris Dede (2006), an expert on scaling in the K-12 education context, concurs that successful scaling requires adapting innovations to local context, which means “closing gaps that exist between the innovation’s demands and an organization’s capacity” (p. 11). To change practice may require policy changes to remove roadblocks, and it may also require professional development to help faculty and staff understand innovations and allow them to be sustained and grow.

**Guiding Principle 3: Through networks and professional development, practitioners gain access to expertise and resources that are vital to scaling innovation.**

When community colleges engage in TAACCCT (and other initiatives), they become part of a larger network of community colleges that have similar goals and expected outcomes. Consortia created through TAACCCT bring together community colleges in networks that connect to other schools to address workforce, economic, and social concerns. To do this, community colleges draw upon local expertise to share resources and technical support, and through partnerships they collaborate with workforce agencies, employers, universities, community-based organizations, and others to address local needs. Working independently or in conjunction with others,

community colleges prepare diverse learners to navigate guided pathways through postsecondary education and into the workforce. Sharing information about how labor markets work and how education and training providers are linked to local, state, national, and global economies is important. Through strategic communications, practitioners acquire the necessary knowledge they need to scale innovations. With respect to TAACCCT, a consortium of community colleges acts as a network to support practitioners and their partners in engaging in principle-driven practice to implement and scale innovations. Through the TCI Network, TAACCCT consortia operate as a mega-network that links experience and expertise across these different consortia.

**Guiding Principle 4: Practitioners tell their stories of how scaling change in policy and practice happens in the public context.**

Scaling in the public sector can occur at the local, state and federal levels and sometimes occurs at multiple policy levels simultaneously. Asera, McDonnell, and Soricone (2013) suggest states that have been successful in scaling up career pathway reforms have approached their efforts in a sequential fashion, beginning with planning and moving to initiating, expanding, and ultimately sustaining. They refer to this process as the “arc of scaling” to reflect the trajectory from planning to sustaining. Scaling state policy change begins when practitioners gain consensus on a problem and generate a framework for potential solutions to bring about system-level change. Consensus is needed to engage practitioners, including and extending from faculty to system leaders, in bringing about change. They also note the importance of states starting with a sub-set of institutions to provide a test bed for reform and then scaling up to the entire system. Lessons learned by the system as a whole and by the few involved in pilot testing can be transferred to the rest of the state, if data on implementation and scaling are gathered and shared. The concept of adaptation is to scale and sustain change is relevant at all levels. This strategic approach to state-level scaling presents a best case scenario, where goals are clear, plans are carefully executed, and lessons are documented and disseminated to those eager to adopt the innovation. Unfortunately, there are many examples where innovation and scaling happen in a much messier way. Sometimes when organizations don’t have clear plans, there is limited understanding of implementation, and data are lacking or misinterpreted. Even when innovations are implemented with care, there can be limited opportunity for practitioners to communicate with each other to disseminate lessons learned. Therefore, an important goal of TCI is finding ways in which practitioners engaged in scaling can tell their stories.

**Guiding Principle 5: Technical assistance that utilizes technology to strengthen resources and expertise is critical to scaling transformative change.**

Technology has become a critical element of innovation, and it has also become a very important aspect of sustaining and

scaling innovation. For example, technology applications for learning through online and open education resources are center stage today, as are technology applications to achieve greater efficiencies in delivery, administration and assessment. Equally important is the application of technology to support implementation, sustainability and scaling. For example, social network mapping can be used to visually represent relationships among innovations and users to give insight into how innovations grow and change over time. They can illustrate weak and strong connections between user groups that indicate where additional resources are needed to encourage scaling (Rowson, Broom, & Jones, 2010). Practices are more likely to be implemented and improved when technical assistance is provided by experts who understand how innovation can happen and how to adapt innovation to the local context. Finding expertise of this sort can be challenging, but the value of effective technology assistance cannot be overstated in the context of transformative change.

**Guiding Principle 6: Identifying and engaging users in dissemination that is sensitive to context is important to scaling transformative change.**

Dissemination begins by assessing the ways potential user groups (sometimes referred to as stakeholders) implement an innovation and tailor the innovation to promote scale-up in other contexts. Bradley et al. (2011) who researched scaling in international contexts recommended:

- Tailoring of innovation to fit target user groups;
- Development of political, regulatory, socio-cultural, and economic support for the use of the innovation in target user groups;
- Deep engagement with target user groups to ensure that the innovation is translated, integrated and replicated effectively; and
- Devolving of efforts to spread and innovation from the initial user groups to additional sets of user groups often through social and professional networks and relationships.

The ultimate goal of dissemination is to not only share the features of the innovation but also to help potential users understand how implementation was done in the original context so that the target users can understand how to adapt and adopt the innovation in the new organization.

**Guiding Principle 7: Integrating implementation and evaluation enhances learning for the purposes of scaling innovations and growing impact.**

Using multiple forms of evaluation is important to scaling large-scale innovations. Rigorous designs, including quasi-experiments or experiments, may be valuable if these designs are appropriate and feasible, but forcing them has limited utility if the results lack validity, reliability, and utility. An alternative approach to program evaluation that may

prove fruitful for understanding the scaling of innovations is developmental evaluation (Patton, 2011). Patton (2011) writes that developmental evaluation is “informed by systems thinking and sensitive to complex nonlinear dynamics.” He reports that it involves asking evaluative questions, applying evaluation logic, and gathering real time data to inform ongoing decision making and adaptations.” Often the evaluator becomes part of the team “to infuse team discussions with evaluative questions, thinking, and data, and to facilitate systemic data-based reflection and decision making in the developmental process.” In the context of TAACCCT and similar initiatives, the tendency to focus on performance reporting to the detriment of other forms of evaluation can be overwhelming. When this happens, the potential to use evaluation to learn, to innovate, and to grow impact is diminished or lost entirely. Balancing the complexity of implementation with evaluation methods that are nuanced and sensitive to the program goals, strategies, and intended outcomes is difficult but necessary. When this happens, when evaluation is integrated rather than separated, the implementation of innovation is optimized to grow impact.

**Future Research on Scaling Transformative Change**

Moving forward, OCCRL researchers will engage practitioners involved in the TCI Network in reformulating the guiding principles, not to get them right as much as to ensure they reflect practice on the ground, where community college practitioners and their partners live day to day. Lessons from scholar experts such as Adrianna Kezar, who is cited earlier in this newsletter, has been very helpful to our work. Kezar (2011) has noted the importance of gaining insights into scaling from wherever lessons can be learned, such as K-12 education, and she has countered critiques that higher education culture is not responsive to innovation and change. She, along with Coburn (2003) and others, note that higher education can learn (and has learned) from K-12 education and other social contexts (e.g., health care, social services) about how scaling works in higher education.

Our future research on scaling transformative change calls for increased focus on the ways community colleges in particular spread innovations developed under TAACCCT and related programs to grow impact. Drawing on theories of social innovation interwoven with lessons learned from practice, our research will uncover ways guiding principles and promising practices relate to scaling. Insights from this research are applicable to other large-scale, policy-driven initiatives so our vision is to use learn from TAACCCT but not limit our work to TAACCCT. Interest in innovation is ubiquitous and should not be tied exclusively to one federal program, but rather use the window of reform associated with TAACCCT to study, learn, and contribute to the larger social good.

For more information about the Transformative Change Initiative (TCI) at [http://occril.illinois.edu/projects/transformative\\_change/](http://occril.illinois.edu/projects/transformative_change/).

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## Reverse Transfer Initiative Credit When It's Due Expands: Three New States Join Initiative

by Shelley Mix, Associate Director of Communications, OCCRL  
and Jason Taylor, Post-Doctoral Research Associate, OCCRL

The multi-state Credit When It's Due (CWID) initiative is expanding with the addition of Georgia, Tennessee, and Texas. Now totaling 15 states, this national grant program continues to facilitate the implementation and improve the process of reverse transfer degree programs.

As explained in the CWID grant announcement from Lumina Foundation for Education, "The initiative is designed to encourage partnerships of community colleges and universities to significantly expand programs that award associate degrees to transfer students when the student complete the requirements for the associate degree while pursuing a bachelor's degree."<sup>1</sup>

Lumina Foundation and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation are supporting OCCRL to conduct the research for the CWID initiative, but CWID represents a joint venture of several other foundations including the Greater Texas Foundation, The Helios Education Foundation, Kresge Foundation, and USA Funds.

Georgia, Tennessee, and Texas join 12 states who are currently implementing reverse transfer as part of the CWID initiative: Arkansas, Colorado, Florida, Hawaii, Maryland, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, New York, North Carolina, Ohio, and Oregon.

OCCRL's research design consists of three related studies. The baseline study was published in October 2013; The policy implementation and data capacity study and the impact study are forthcoming. In preparation for a CWID convening in Atlanta from March 26-27, 2014, detailed state profiles were compiled on each of the 12 original states. Brief summaries were also compiled for the recent additions of Georgia, Tennessee, and Texas, and the three states' recent activities are summarized below. The baseline study, state profiles, and state summaries will be available on the CWID webpage.<sup>2</sup>

### Plans in Tennessee

Kevin Hardy, in an article in Tennessee's *Times Free Press*,<sup>3</sup> writes that the CWID initiative will help about 1,300 students each year who have completed at least 45 of the 60 credit hours required for most associate's degrees. Hardy writes that

<sup>1</sup> See [www.luminafoundation.org/newsroom/news\\_releases/2012-10-10.html](http://www.luminafoundation.org/newsroom/news_releases/2012-10-10.html)

<sup>2</sup> See <http://occrll.illinois.edu/projects/cwid/>

<sup>3</sup> See <http://www.timesfreepress.com/news/2014/jan/08/college-students-to-benefit-from-transfer-down/>

in Tennessee, CWID is part of Governor Bill Haslam larger "Drive to 55" effort aimed at boosting college completion from 32 percent to 55 percent of Tennessee's adults by 2025.

In addition to boosting the state's graduation rates, the article notes it will give students motivation to keep going and will give students a credential that they can use to get a job in the marketplace.

In Tennessee, nine public universities, 13 community colleges and eight private institutions from within the University of Tennessee System, the Tennessee Board of Regents and the Tennessee Independent Colleges and Universities Association will participate, with another dozen private schools expected to join later.

### Texas Implementation Efforts

In Texas, the Lumina grant to the Lone Star College System will fund 24 postsecondary institutions and five support foundations and organizations committed to what the state calls the "Texas Reverse Transfer Initiative," according to a *YourHoustonNews.com* article,<sup>4</sup> and will aid in Texas's degree attainment goal.

According to the article, in Fall 2012, the "Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board reported that 454,154 students transferred into a Texas university with credits earned at a Texas two-year college. Only 10.8 percent of those students (48,895) earned an associate degree before transferring, so the majority of the students are potentially eligible to receive a reverse transfer associate degree."

Officials in Texas, as in Tennessee, said they hope this program offers additional incentives to complete a bachelor's degree, because the grant will support all students interested in transferring to any public university in Texas.

### Georgia's Expansion Gets Underway

The University System of Georgia and the University System of Georgia Foundation plan to increase the awarding of associate's degrees via reverse transfer at all University System of Georgia (USG) institutions, according to Barbara L. Brown,

<sup>4</sup> See: [http://www.yourhoustonnews.com/tomball/news/lone-star-college-system-awarded-lumina-foundation-grant/article\\_57495407-9d75-501d-a605-aba74a69502d.html?mode=story](http://www.yourhoustonnews.com/tomball/news/lone-star-college-system-awarded-lumina-foundation-grant/article_57495407-9d75-501d-a605-aba74a69502d.html?mode=story)

USG Assistant Vice Chancellor for Transitional and General Education. Brown thinks that part of the success will hinge on defining and removing policy barriers to reverse transfer at the USG and institutional levels. To better support reverse transfer, the state plans to define and enhance data systems. Since receiving the grant in November 2013, the USG several sending and receiving institutions indicated their enthusiasm about

initiating reverse transfer processes, and three partnerships of community colleges and universities are actively developing processes in preparation of launching reverse transfer.

For more information about OCCRL's research on Credit When It's Due, Jason Taylor can be reached at [taylor26@illinois.edu](mailto:taylor26@illinois.edu) and see also: <http://occrll.illinois.edu/projects/cwid/>

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## ***Scaling Career Pathways: Insights and Experience from the Field* – Featured Presentation from the 2014 Pathways to Results Conference**

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Featured Presentation from the 2014 Pathways to Results Conference by Lisa Soricone, Senior Project Manager, Building Economic Opportunity, Jobs for the Future and Harmony Little, Project Manager, Workforce Solutions, Kentucky Community and Technical College System.

For presentation slides, please refer to: “Conference Materials”, “Breakout Session Presentations”, and “Scaling Up\_thinking big presentation3 314.pdf” at <http://occrll.illinois.edu/projects/pathways/scaling-up-2014/>

At the Pathways to Results conference on March 5, 2014, OCCRL invited Lisa Soricone, senior project manager at Jobs for the Future and one of the co-authors of *Thinking Big: A Framework for States on Scaling Up Community College Innovation*, to highlight lessons learned about scaling-up, based on a review of practices and research on the topic. This presentation also featured the work of the Kentucky Community and Technical College System (KCTCS) in scaling the Accelerating Opportunity initiative, presented by Harmony Little, a workforce solutions project manager at KCTCS. An excerpt of *Thinking Big* is featured below, along with a summary of the conference presentation.

Quoting Keith Bird, Chancellor Emeritus of KCTCS, Dr. Soricone set the stage about scaling up: “To work at scale, colleges have to impact a significant issue or a significant number of people.” As a definition of what is meant by scaling, Dr. Soricone outlined that scaling is designed to:

1. Increase the overall impact of an innovation or program to reach a significant portion of a target group or groups,
2. Extend the reach of the solution to meet the magnitude of the problem, and
3. Put in place structures and systems to sustain innovation.

In *Thinking Big*, Jobs for the Future features practices and lessons learned from multiple states, highlighting four initiatives: (a) the Arkansas Career Pathways Initiative, (b) Integrated Basic Education and Skills Training Program (I-BEST) in Washington state, (c) the Oregon Career Pathways Initiative, and (d) the Virginia Community College System Developmental Education Redesign.

An influential framework for the “Arc of Scaling” created by Jobs for the Future, was the research of Cynthia Coburn (2003) who outlined four features of scaling: (a) spread, (b) depth of implementation, (c) shift in reform ownership, and (d) sustainability. The stages of the Arc of Scaling are summarized in the excerpt below, and include: (a) preparation and planning, (b) initiating, c) expanding, and (d) sustaining. Key lessons articulated by Dr. Soricone and outlined in the excerpt below are:

- Think about scale from the beginning.
- Generate systems change through scale-up.
- Balance model fidelity with local adaptation.
- Use communication as the connective tissue to scaling up.
- Build strategic partnerships and relationships to support scaling.
- Develop and maintain resources to support scaling up.
- Use data to inform key decisions about scaling.
- Understand that sustaining innovations is a dynamic process.

In the context of the Accelerating Opportunity, KCTCS and its partners in Kentucky Adult Education and Kentucky Career Center scaled this initiative from 8 to all of its 16 community and technical colleges within two years. The goal of Accelerating Opportunity is to help low-skilled students succeed in college and earn credentials that will lead to a family-sustaining wage. Based on the I-BEST program in Washington state, the core strategies are: (a) team teaching, (b) contextualized basic skills instruction, (c) wrap-around student support services, and (d) alignment of pathway programs to labor market demands.

Kentucky applied lessons from *Thinking Big* by working through the Arc of Scaling to scale-up the I-BEST program

model in Kentucky's Accelerating Opportunity initiative. Some key accomplishments in each of the stages of the Arc of Scaling are summarized below.

### Preparation and Planning

- Planned to scale Accelerating Opportunity statewide from the beginning
- Embedded a mentorship model for colleges from Phase I to support Phase II colleges
- Aligned the initiative to partners' missions and outcomes
- Created state and local-level partnerships around a common vision and core values, with the support of state leadership that trickled down to local partnerships

### Initiating

- Selected a mix of urban, rural, large and small colleges to be part of the Phase I cohort to ensure diversity and matched them with a Phase II college based on proximity
- Supported college implementation with a state and a local coordinator at each college
- Created systems and infrastructure for data collection, communication, and peer learning
- Used an inquiry and continuous improvement process to share lessons learned and best practices through peer learning

### Expanding

- Phase II colleges began planning a year in advance before implementation and were included in meetings and conference calls early on
- Held multiple professional development sessions, including a visit to Walla Walla Community College to see the program in action
- Phase I colleges shared lessons learned and best practices with Phase II colleges
- Celebrated ongoing accomplishments and identified initiative champions to foster shared ownership

### Sustaining

- Colleges worked together to institutionalize processes
- Enhanced communication and marketing to share program vision and engage stakeholders in ongoing implementation
- Worked through policy changes in assessment and placement as well as "braided funding" model to identify funding opportunities to sustain the initiative
- Used data and evaluation to demonstrate success, identify opportunities for program improvements, and include student feedback on implementation (focus groups)

Harmony Little shared specific lessons learned from scaling up Accelerating Opportunity in Kentucky:

1. Provide ample planning time for initiating and expanding phases.
2. Ensure authority of the persons leading scale-up.
3. Expect to have to make changes and adjustments along the way.
4. Provide professional development early and adjust as initiative evolves.
5. Communicate, communicate, communicate.
6. Celebrate successes and accomplishments.
7. Conduct site visits to illustrate program vision and negotiate implementation.
8. Use grant-funding accountability to drive the work forward.
9. Focus on what's working.



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## Executive Summary of Jobs for the Future's *Thinking Big: A Framework for States on Scaling Up Community College Innovation*

It is a truism of American social policy that our nation has great success generating innovative programs that improve outcomes for participants—but that we are far less effective at moving from small, “boutique” programs into broadly applied solutions that improve the prospects of large numbers of individuals. This is certainly true in the education and workforce fields. Given this history, it is no surprise that the challenge of “getting to scale” is a growing preoccupation among educators, policymakers, and funders who are impatient with the pace of change and of the limited adoption of effective practices and programs.

We at Jobs for the Future (JFF) are not the first to tackle the question of scale. We felt the need, though, to undertake our own inquiry and craft our own assessment of how to think about scale and to specify a framework that could be useful to both policymakers and practitioners. JFF has over two decades of experience designing and implementing scaling-up strategies to expand educational and economic opportunity for low-income youth and adults. We have learned from our work, and we wanted to systematize and further develop our thinking.

Starting from our organizational experience, we also mined the extensive research literature on scale and sustainability. Most important, though, we tested our emerging framework by examining efforts designed to spread, across entire state community college systems, evidence-based innovations that improve outcomes for students. We looked in depth at efforts in Arkansas, Oregon, Virginia, and Washington state (see “Four Examples of Scaling Up Community College Reform”) and interviewed key policy and practice entrepreneurs, college and system leaders, and experienced evaluators of community college initiatives, in Florida, Illinois, Kentucky, Louisiana, Michigan, New York, and Texas.

Based on the literature and the states’ experiences, we have produced a definition of scaling up and of the conditions for its success and sustainability. We have identified distinct phases of scaling up, from initial planning to institutionalization and sustaining. Our goal is that the framework offered here helps innovators be deliberate and strategic from the outset, increasing the odds of successful expansion, impact, and sustainability.

### Four Examples of Scaling Up Community College Reform

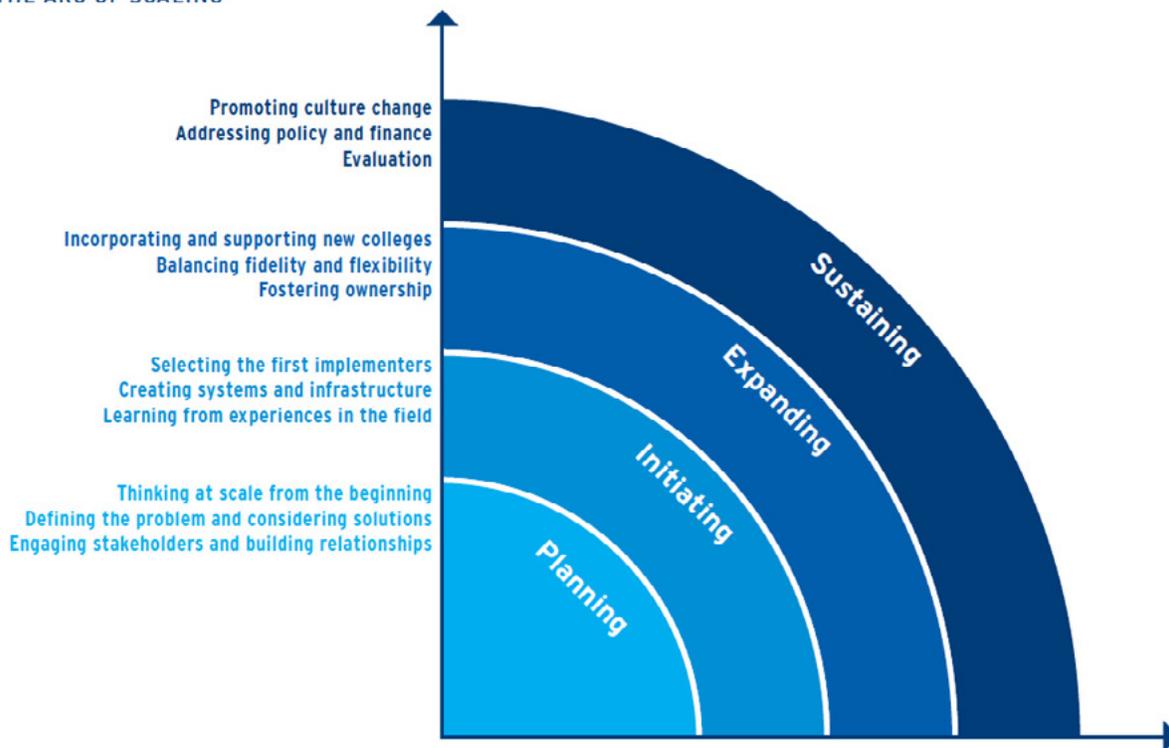
1. The Arkansas Career Pathways Initiative, administered by the Arkansas Department of Higher Education at 25 sites, including all 22 community colleges in the state, serves custodial “working poor” parents who are eligible for or receiving Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) funds. Over 27,000 students have participated in Career Pathways, with over 24,000 certificates and degrees awarded.
2. The Oregon Career Pathways Initiative, coordinated by the Oregon Department of Community Colleges & Workforce Development, has been scaled up to Oregon’s 17 community colleges. The goals are to increase the number of Oregonians with certificates, credentials, and degrees, and to ease transitions across the education continuum and into employment. More than 350 career pathway road maps have been developed; over 240 Career Pathway Certificates of Completion are offered statewide. Since 2008, students have earned more than 5,000 short-term certificates.
3. The Virginia Community College System’s redesign of developmental education has led to change across the entire system of 23 colleges and 40 campuses, enrolling a total of 280,000 students.
4. The Washington State Board for Community and Technical Colleges’ Integrated Basic Education and Skills Training (I-BEST) program accelerates the progress of Adult Basic Education students by combining basic skills education with occupational training. The program is in all 34 of the system’s colleges, with 163 programs and over 3,000 students participating annually.

### The Arc of Scaling

JFF’s interviews with state and college leaders reinforced the idea that scaling up is an ongoing process, with distinct phases. While each statewide scaling-up initiative is unique in content and context, all share an arc that begins with preparation and planning, then moves into initiating, followed by expanding, and concluding with sustaining, with a change in practices and norms. The arc represents the ever outward movement of an innovation as it is scaled to expand its reach throughout a system or set of colleges. Throughout this arc of scaling are common experiences and strategies, some of which span the entire process.

**Preparation and Planning:** The groundwork for scaling up an innovation takes place before the first student enrolls in a new program. The first step in scaling is identifying an innovation to test and scale that addresses an identified need. Once the innovation has been selected, effective planning for scale requires thinking systemically and systematically even if a program is only being piloted in a few colleges. It takes into account the complexity of the change process, considers strengths, and anticipates obstacles, resulting in a nuanced understanding of the system and landscape, a clearly defined problem, and a potential solution.

## THE ARC OF SCALING



**Initiating:** The next step is to identify and engage likely colleges for initial implementation. Central office leaders create guidelines, organize data systems, and build pathways for communication, while the actual work of program development—refining and adapting the model—takes place at the colleges. Those involved with the program at the state and local levels systematically learn from early experiences in the field thru data analysis and stakeholder feedback, then refine the model and prepare it for further expansion.

**Expanding:** The third stage is expanding—bringing more colleges into the network and expanding the program at each college. Lessons learned from initiating help the second or third wave of colleges get started. Building on the system capacity developed during the initiating phase, the central office supports the new colleges, incorporates them into structures set up for collaboration and peer learning, and orients them to the guidelines, systems, and structures in place. The model evolves as more colleges adopt the reform.

**Sustaining:** The act of sustaining is dynamic, requiring both continuity and flexibility. Without the novelty or excitement of start up, sustaining relies on changing the norms of practice and keeping successes visible. The strategies and activities that brought a program to scale—such as professional development, communication, and peer learning—need to be ongoing to sustain it. Professional development, communication, and the network of practice all continue.

## Lessons Learned

Even as the system contexts and innovations vary, the state experiences examined in JFF’s research revealed a set of consistent themes and lessons.

The strongest message from state systems and colleges is the need to think and work toward scale from the beginning—from the top down, the bottom up, and through the middle. The vision of scale—in terms of proportion of the target population to be reached, expansion strategy and timeline, and fiscal sustainability—has to drive planning and implementation from the outset.

In the state systems studied by JFF, the entrepreneurial leaders articulated and were guided by a clear, definable vision of scale. They anticipated and prepared for responses from their peers, their subordinates, and their various stakeholders, whether enthusiastic or skeptical. Some started by introducing changes across the entire system; in others, the state strategically selected a diverse set of pilot institutions and then expanded based on evidence and experience. In each, planning began with a discussion of assumptions about scale and how to assemble the human, political, and financial capital needed to implement innovation at the desired scale and scope.

Large-scale innovations invariably require engagement across systems—K-12 and higher education; workforce and economic

development; community-based supports and college-based academics. Large-scale problems do not respect system boundaries; effective solutions often engage multiple agencies and cross structural and cultural barriers. Because of this, planning for scale requires careful attention to communication and buy-in strategies and to the building of strong, motivated partnerships, collaborations, and relationships across institutions and systems. The initiatives studied for this report invested heavily in the professional networks, individual relationships, and institutional partnerships that provide the social capital critical to growth and broad adoption of reform.

As efforts to scale up innovation grow and mature, the challenges shift. As an innovation is scaled, leaders must grapple with the need to balance fidelity to the model as designed with the reality that local conditions frequently demand adaptation if an innovation is to take root. They must turn from the challenge of assembling development capital and of driving innovation to the proposed scale to the equally important challenge of ensuring ongoing resources to sustain new practices at the expanded scale and scope. States and systems must creatively

braid together existing funds but also identify long-term sources of funding and commit to pursuing cost-effective ways of sustaining innovation.

Throughout the scaling-up process, effective use of student data is critical: initially, to make the case for reform and for the particular strategy; later, as a tool for feedback and formative evaluation and for continuous program improvement and midcourse corrections; and ultimately, as evidence of impact to policymakers and participants. Finally, the experience of states included in our research reminds us of how complex the change process always is. And it reminds us that ongoing focus and engagement are critical during all stages of the arc of scaling.

Jobs for the Future ([www.jff.org](http://www.jff.org)) works with our partners to design and drive the adoption of education and career pathways leading from college readiness to career advancement for those struggling to succeed in today's economy. ♦



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