



Dr. Randall VanWagoner
President
Mohawk Valley Community College
1101 Sherman Drive
Utica, NY 13501

Dear President VanWagoner:

Thank you for being part of the Achieving the Dream (ATD) National Reform Network and for your continued commitment to student success and equity. After reviewing your Implementation Plan and receiving input from your coaching team, we offer several observations in this letter about your institution's progress to date regarding the student success and equity goals you have identified. Specifically, the feedback will note some of your Implementation Plan's strengths and identify areas of potential improvement or recommend areas for further exploration.

Strengths of the Implementation Plan

As we reflect on all of your work over the past year and your plans going forward, we are most impressed by these accomplishments.

- Your Implementation Plan is outstanding. It is based on the excellent work completed by the Data Team to collect and analyze three years of longitudinal cohort data for the five Achieving the Dream data points. Once this data was analyzed, the Data Team then looked at the large problem areas and used even more data to ultimately make recommendations to the Core Team. The quality of this work certainly exceeds the work that we normally see from a college in its first year of work.
- The two selected priorities are solidly based on the evidence from the Data Team that cuts broadly across several student cohorts and appears to directly address concerns that were identified. The proposed plans are innovative and capable of being tracked as the initiatives get underway. Additionally, we are very pleased that the plan calls for faculty collaboration across virtually all disciplines at the college.

Focus on Institutional Change

Achieving the Dream Institutions recognize the importance of designing effective, scalable changes that fit together to build whole-college solutions to improving student outcomes. Your institution has demonstrated its commitment to institutional change through its efforts over the past year and its plan for implementation.

The priority plans to address technology and reading concerns are substantial and will result in a new culture of college-wide collaboration among most, if not all, faculty and will positively impact a large number of students. We believe this will strengthen the development of a culture of broad engagement among faculty and staff and help create cross-discipline cooperation. It is clear that all three student groups identified by the evidence as needing help will be directly benefited as will many other students.

Areas of Improvement and Recommended Next Steps

We recognize that the distinct environment of each college poses unique challenges and opportunities. In terms of next steps, we would like to suggest the following as possible ways to improve student outcomes over the next year.

- It is possible that this plan will lead to yet another year of data collection, research and planning to perfect the initiatives. To maintain momentum and a sense of urgency around your student success work, the college may wish to create short, medium and long term action-based goals for both priorities to ensure some implementation of the priorities begins during this coming year. Examples for small pilots could come in the reading area by starting one to three paired courses as soon as possible to determine if this is a good initiative. In the technology area, the identification and publication of courses that have high technology content could happen quickly, while other work to create common formats for Blackboard is still underway.
- We are impressed with the use of evidence that led to this plan and know that there is a strong culture of evidence growing at the college. To build on this success, we emphasize the value of creating formative and summative evaluation plans for each aspect of your two priorities. Lead, as well as lag, measures should be included in the progress monitoring plan and data should be collected often so problems that unexpectedly arise can be solved quickly.

Final Thoughts

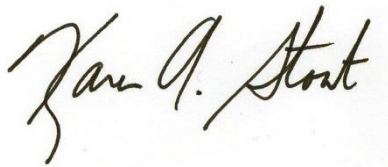
We are very impressed with the energy and engagement of the faculty and staff at Mohawk Valley. The strong leadership demonstrated by yourself and many administrators, faculty, and staff has positioned the college for future success. We commend the college's courage in putting forward all data, openly identifying concerns, and then addressing them. The Core and Data Teams are dedicated, thoughtful, and transparent. The proposed communication plan appears likely to continue this valuable transparency.

ATD is continuously building upon the institutional-change lessons learned from our network over the last ten years and, as a result, we have recently released the next iteration of our institutional-change framework. This framework identifies seven core capacity areas essential to growing colleges' abilities to impact student outcomes through systemic and sustainable

practices. In the next year, ATD plans to release a new suite of tools and other resources to undergird colleges' implementation of and maturation in the core capacity areas. We urge you to make the most of the new framework and resources as you take your student success work to the next level.

We appreciate the hard work, time, and resources that your institution devotes to your Achieving the Dream efforts. We encourage you to discuss the feedback in this letter with your Leadership Coach and Data Coach, who are ready to support and guide you moving forward as it may assist you in shaping the direction of your ongoing student success efforts. We look forward to working with you in the coming year and welcome your questions and comments along the way.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Karen A. Stout". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'K'.

Dr. Karen A. Stout
President & CEO

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Cindy Lenhart". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'C'.

Cindy Lenhart
Vice President for Community College Relations