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## Community College Student Success: Equity and Excellence at D.R.E.A.M. 2012

Community colleges are one of the few feasible pathways to the American Dream for millions of Americans. And while these institutions struggle valiantly under the toughest conditions to help their students succeed, too many of those students are dropping out; too few are gaining the credentials they'll need to succeed in an increasingly challenging job market.

[Achieving the Dream](#), a national nonprofit leading the nation's most comprehensive, non-governmental reform network for student success in higher education history, and [Completion by Design](#), a more recent, highly-ambitious student completion initiative launched by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, are working hard to help these critical institutions do their important work. Public Agenda is a Founding Partner in Achieving the Dream as well as a national partner of Completion by Design.

Public Agenda's Will Friedman, Jyoti Gupta, and Isaac Rowlett participated earlier this month in [D.R.E.A.M. - Achieving the Dream's 2012 Annual Meeting on Student Success](#) - in Dallas, Texas, where they joined the Assistance Team from Completion by Design, along with 1,500 influential policy-makers, thought-leaders, and practitioners from more than 150 institutions and 30 states. The theme of D.R.E.A.M. 2012 was "Equity and Excellence," and participants deliberated on the issues of equity and student success in higher education.

As part of a joint initiative with the [Aspen Institute](#) and Achieving the Dream around community college excellence and leadership, Will facilitated a focus group with forward-thinking, innovative community college presidents, those who are at the forefront of the community college student success movement, to determine how to best foster the next generation of community college leadership. Recognizing the role that communities outside the campus have in student achievement, Isaac and Jyoti ran a workshop at the event around engaging communities in student success. During the workshop, they heard a lot of attendees talk about the challenges of geographic



constraints to community gatherings and a lack of college leadership support for broad-based engagement. At the same time, they also heard about the desire to foster more of a college-going culture in the larger community, to raise awareness within the community of the options available at the college, and to collect feedback on how the college can better serve the community.

How else can community college leaders, faculty, and staff encourage completion and success for their students? Check out Public Agenda and Achieving the Dream's [Cutting Edge](#) series of reports, providing practical guidance on several core challenges that community colleges must confront as they work to move the needle on student success and completion.

### Everyone at the Table: Evaluation as a Conversation, Not a Spreadsheet

Through the arguments and controversies that abound around teacher evaluation plans, we must remember why, exactly, the discussion around teacher effectiveness is so important. What is the value in identifying an effective teacher and measuring that quality?

We believe that most, if not all, of us share common values and ideals

around teacher evaluation, and, as we wrote in a piece for the Gates Foundation's [Impatient Optimists](#) blog, those values are all about helping our nation's students learn and succeed.

And, speaking of students, we like the way they think!

"[Evaluation is not a spreadsheet. It is a conversation](#)," noted one student from Woodbury, New York, in a comment in The New York Times.

We agree!

We've written before about [Everyone at the Table](#), the joint effort between The American Institutes of Research (AIR) and Public Agenda to further the teacher evaluation debate beyond dysfunction and stalemate by incorporating the perspective of those most affected yet least engaged: teachers. As we note on our newly-launched [Tumblr blog](#), at a time when the discussion of teacher evaluation is so prominent in education circles and in the news, we want to make sure that teachers' voices are being included in that discussion.

How would you want to see teachers evaluated? Why? Join the conversation! [Build your own teacher evaluation process](#) by downloading our form and submitting it to [Every1atthetable@gmail.com](mailto:Every1atthetable@gmail.com).

The first 10 to submit will receive a surprise package mailed to their home address. To find the form and follow the project



check out [Everyone At The Table](#) on [Tumblr](#), [Twitter](#) and [Facebook](#).

## What We're Reading

The outlook is dim for younger workers and unemployment. Check out what Public Agenda's Jean Johnson and Scott Bittle have to say about the subject on their [Huffington Post](#) blog .



[America the Fixable](#): A provocative new series on The Atlantic website, organized by Philip Howard, Chair of [Common Good](#) and Public Agenda Board Member, will each month identify a different challenge facing the United States -- regulation, school bureaucracy, healthcare, civil service, campaign finance reform - and offer potential solutions from experts on the topic. This week, America the Fixable features articles on obsolete law by:

- Sen. Mark Warner (D-VA) (proposing a "[one in, one out](#)" requirement for new regulation),
- Bob Litan of the Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation (on how [state licensing laws impede innovation](#)), and
- Julie Barnes of the Bipartisan Policy Center (describing [legal barriers to healthcare overhaul](#)).

In their first eBook, [The Year Past/The Year Ahead](#), the editors and writers of [techPresident](#) have chronicled the way people used technology to change politics in 2011, as well as the projections of their friends and fellow travelers for the year ahead.

While the national political dialogue is bogged down in dysfunction and gridlock, in communities and cities around the nation, leaders and citizens are solving tough problems pragmatically and successfully every day. Judith Rodin from the Rockefeller Foundation and Bruce Katz from Brookings shine a light on what they call the nation's **Pragmatic Caucus**-a reflection of "the genius of American democracy"- in a fascinating piece in [TIME](#).