



Zane State College Receives Grant from Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation

Zane State College is among five two-year colleges in the state of Ohio receiving a grant from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and MDC, Inc. The \$743,000 grant is to be used to expand groundbreaking developmental education programs that promise to boost the college completion rates of low-income and minority students.

Zane State College received the grant in part because of its innovative developmental programs implemented through [*Achieving the Dream: Community Colleges Count*](#), a national initiative that is aiming to dramatically boost college graduation rates among low-income and minority students. The developmental education models pioneered by Zane State College and other Achieving the Dream colleges represents some of the most promising work in the country for boosting college completion rates among struggling students.

“One of our major focus areas is to help students achieve a successful first year of college because we know that once students progress to the second year of college, about 80% of them graduate,” said Dr. Paul Brown, president of Zane State College. “We have been employing intensive advising interventions to help students advance. I am proud to say that the graduation rate for our students is over two times the national average.”

“Too many institutions have not developed powerful and effective ways to accelerate academic progress for students who start college underprepared,” said Hilary Pennington, director of Education, Postsecondary Success and Special Initiatives at the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. “By working together, states, community colleges, and local school districts can design programs to accelerate high-quality learning and shorten the amount of time it takes to earn a degree.”

Zane State College began participating in *Achieving the Dream* four years ago when College officials discovered that a large percentage of students who did not take developmental math classes during their first year were not completing their degree. As a result, the College instituted an intervention advising program to help students take the proper courses in their first year of college and in the correct sequence. The programs have helped improve graduation rates dramatically. In the College’s June 2009 graduating class, 43% of the graduates took developmental education classes their first year of college and 23% of those students graduated with honors.

“We already have very successful core developmental education programs, such as our pre-college Tech Prep early testing program and our QuickStart to College program, which helps students who have just completed their G.E.D. transition to college,” said Dr. Chad Brown, vice president of Academic Services and Workforce Development. “With the new grant, we can take a big step forward and design new courses that will pair a developmental class with a college-level class and also some compressed courses in math to allow students to complete two courses in one term. This will save the students time and tuition to be able to take advantage of this new way of delivering developmental education.”

Zane State College will also use the grant to expand its developmental math advising program to all developmental courses and incorporate technology into developmental education courses with mobile labs.

Georgeanna Meighen, who graduated from Zane State College earlier this month, is thrilled that—like herself—students will benefit from developmental programs. “When I came to Zane State College I was afraid that not being strong in math would keep me from achieving my dreams,” said Meighen. “I would never have been able to get through college without the developmental math courses. They gave me the skills I needed that I didn’t possess before.” Meighan, who graduated with nearly a 4.0 grade point average, will begin classes at Franklin University in the fall to earn a bachelor’s degree in Information Technology.

“These programs help under-prepared students strengthen skills in reading, writing, and math, in order to be successful in their college-level coursework,” said Rebecca Ament, associate dean for Developmental Education and the First Year. “The new initiatives in the grant will extend our capabilities to do more personal advising and help students develop their academic plans for their first year of college. It will also provide more funding for professional development for faculty and staff.”

The grants given in Ohio are part of a larger \$16.5 million effort that will reach an estimated 45,000 students nationwide. Today, 10 other colleges and four states received similar grants from the Gates Foundation to build upon the promising work developed under *Achieving the Dream*. Each community college will receive \$743,000 over three years to expand their programs to more students who need the assistance. Lumina Foundation for Education has committed \$1.5 million to this initiative for evaluation and communications.

The four other Ohio two-year colleges that will receive the grant include, Cuyahoga Community College in Cleveland; Jefferson Community College in Steubenville; North Central State College in Mansfield; and Sinclair Community College in Dayton.

“The pressing need to shore up weak academic skills in first-year students is one of the most significant, but least discussed, problems confronting higher education,” said Carol Lincoln, director of the Developmental Education Initiative and national director of *Achieving the Dream* for MDC. “Colleges that can figure out how to quickly and efficiently boost basic skills, particularly among minority and low-income students, will play a leading role in helping them earn the college degrees necessary for economic success in America today.”

Along with similar efforts in Connecticut, Florida, Texas, and Virginia, the Ohio Department of Education will also receive \$300,000 over three years to implement new data collection systems at both the state and campus levels that will help officials better track the success of their remedial programs. These states have also pledged to measure their progress against those in other states.

The grants announced today build on the Gates Foundation's investments to help ensure every young person in the United States graduates high school ready for college and continues on to obtain a postsecondary degree that prepares them to succeed in the global economy.

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[Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation](#)

Guided by the belief that every life has equal value, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation works to help all people lead healthy, productive lives. In developing countries, it focuses on improving people's health and giving them the chance to lift themselves out of hunger and extreme poverty. In the United States, it seeks to ensure that all people—especially those with the fewest resources—have access to the opportunities they need to succeed in school and life. Based in Seattle, Washington, the foundation is led by CEO Jeff Raikes and Co-chair William H. Gates Sr., under the direction of Bill and Melinda Gates and Warren Buffett.

[Lumina Foundation for Education](#)

The mission of Lumina Foundation for Education is to expand access to postsecondary education in the United States. The Foundation seeks to identify and promote practices leading to improvement in the rates of entry and success in education beyond high school, particularly for students of low income or other underrepresented backgrounds. It likewise seeks improvement in opportunities for adult learners. The Foundation carries out the mission through funding and conducting research; communicating ideas through reports, conferences and other means; and making grants to educational institutions and other nonprofits for innovative programs.

[MDC, Inc.](#)

MDC is a nonprofit headquartered in Chapel Hill, NC. Founded in 1967 to identify and help remove barriers to progress for the South, MDC has been publishing research and developing policies and programs focused on expanding opportunity, reducing poverty, and building inclusive civic cultures in the American South for the past 40 years. We build the capacity of institutions and communities to work for more just and equitable conditions now and into the future. MDC's mission is to help organizations and communities close the gaps that separate people from opportunity.