

In the Crucible of Leadership
(from AACC President's Academy Summer Institute)

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Valencia Wins 2011 Aspen Prize for Focus on College Completion, Job Preparation

In selecting Valencia as the best community college in America, Aspen officials noted that over half of the college's full-time students graduate or transfer within three years of entering the school, a rate significantly higher than the national average (51 percent versus 39 percent). At a time when data show an increasing number of students nationwide are not ready for college-level work – and that the U.S has slipped to 12th globally in the percentage of young adults who hold at least an associate degree – Valencia is experiencing rising graduation rates among all students, including minorities.

- Valencia has experienced dramatic increases in graduation rates among college-ready African American students, nearly tripling in the last decade from 15.4 percent to 44.3 percent today.
- Graduation rates for college-ready Hispanic students have similarly impressive gains, jumping from 38.7 to 45.5 percent in the last decade.

Leader's Role in Change

1. Having a "Working Theory"
 - a. Articulating the "belief basis" for your Strategy
 - b. Developing a shared ownership for that theory
 - c. Examples of Working Theories
 - i. Students want to graduate
 - ii. The most important person to care about completion is the student
2. Focus on Culture Transformation (Not Culture Wars)
 - a. Culture eats strategy for breakfast
 - b. Culture is not the enemy
 - c. Culture Transformation is ALWAYS top down
 - i. The rest can (and needs to) happen bottom up
 - d. Our Culture Core is LEARNING ("Working Theory?")
 - i. Focus on Learning
 - ii. Learning leads to completion
 - iii. Learning takes the focus away from enrollment
 - iv. FTE is NOT a Goal – it's a "Funding Unit"
3. The Interior is the Most Important
 - a. Character
 - b. Integrity
 - c. Vision
 - d. Passion and Persistence

Book Suggestion: To Change the World – James Davidson Hunter