



Innovation is in the American community college DNA, a significant part of its heritage, character, distinction, and leadership for change. The enclosed report, *The Nature of Innovation in the Community College*, adds new insights into why, how, and with what result colleges innovate successfully and lessons they can share. The League for Innovation in the Community College is pleased to provide the report of findings from a study conducted by Terry O'Banion, president emeritus of the League, and supported by MetLife Foundation. The study included 173 innovations at 19 colleges and involving more than 400 community college faculty, staff, and administrators; the innovations were recognized with the prestigious Innovation of the Year Award during the decade 1999-2008. Methods included analysis of descriptions of all of the award-winning innovations, surveys, focus groups, and interviews.

Major findings include:

- Among thousands of potential definitions of innovation, two had the most resonance with the award winners represented in the study.
 - The development or adoption of new or existing ideas for the purpose of improving policies, programs, practices, or personnel.
 - The creation of new opportunities that are transformative.
- Successful innovators were motivated primarily to improve student learning; to improve an existing system, process, practice, or procedure; to improve student retention or attainment; and/or to meet a community need.
- For most innovators, a lack of time was the most significant barrier to success (60%).
- Nearly a third (31%) of the innovators received no special funding or financial support.
- Collaboration was a major factor in success. Most of the innovations (85%) were developed by teams, and team enthusiasm was a top factor in success. Most innovators reported that involvement of a team improved chances their work would endure (74%), and that the collaborative process produced benefits beyond the innovation (70%).
- The institutional characteristics most frequently identified by innovators as highly important for supporting a culture of innovation all involved leadership: visible support of college leaders for innovation (90%); encouragement of risk taking without fear of failure (84%); and encouragement of faculty and staff to think creatively and unconventionally (83%).

Using survey results and analysis of interviews, researchers share a set of guidelines for aspiring innovators, such as aligning the innovation with the college mission, values, and goals; securing administrative support; talking with colleagues; developing a plan; and building a team.

The Nature of Innovation in the Community College report includes a video featuring Innovation of the Year Award winners discussing their ideas about innovation, based on their experiences. The full report, including the video, is also available on the League's website at www.league.org/natureofinnovation. Descriptions of the 173 award-winning innovations included in the study are available at <http://www.league.org/joy.cfm>.

Sincerely,



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