



Foundational Dimensions[®]

(for Two-Year Institutions. Version 2.0)

These Foundational Dimensions statements constitute a model that provides two-year colleges with a means to evaluate and improve the new student experience. This model recognizes the multiple roles and functions of two-year institutions as well as their service to diverse student populations that have widely varying educational backgrounds and goals. As an evaluation tool, the model enables two-year institutions both to confirm their strengths and to recognize the need for improvement. As an aspirational model, the Dimensions provide general guidelines for an intentional design of the new student experience. The Dimensions rest on four assumptions:

- The academic mission of an institution is preeminent.
- The experience of new students is central to the achievement of an institution's mission because it lays the foundation that enables students to achieve their educational goals.
- Systematic evidence provides validation of the Dimensions.
- Collectively, the Dimensions constitute an ideal for improving not only the new student experience, but also the entire college experience.

Foundations Institutions intentionally cultivate learning environments for new students that emerge from a philosophy of two-year colleges as gateways to higher education. The philosophy is explicit and easily understood. It is consistent with the institutional mission, reflects a consensus of internal and external constituencies, and is widely disseminated. The philosophy is also the basis for organizational policies, practices, structures, leadership, and resource allocation to support the new student experience. (Philosophy)

Foundations Institutions provide a comprehensive, coordinated, and flexible approach to the new student experience through effective organizational structures and policies. These structures and policies guide and align all aspects of the new student experience. Through effective partnerships, critical stakeholders such as instructional, administrative, and student services units provide a coherent experience for new students that is enhanced by ongoing faculty and staff development activities and appropriate budgetary arrangements. (Organization)



The Foundational Dimensions were developed by John N. Gardner, Betsy O. Barefoot, and Randy L. Swing of the Policy Center on the First Year of College in collaboration with 87 two-year colleges. The following ten campuses provided national leadership in the inaugural use of the Dimensions: Kennebec Valley Community College, Longview Community College, Middlesex Community College, Montgomery County Community College, Oakton Community College, Pellissippi State Technical Community College, San Jacinto College South, Spokane Falls Community College, University of Wisconsin Colleges, and Virginia Highlands Community College.

Foundations Institutions deliver curricular and co-curricular learning experiences that engage new students in order to develop knowledge, skills, attitudes, and behaviors consistent with the institutional mission, students' academic and career goals, and workplace expectations. Both in and out of the classroom, these learning experiences promote critical thinking, ethical decision making, and the lifelong pursuit of knowledge. (Learning)

Foundations Institutions make new students a high priority for faculty and staff. A culture of responsibility for the experiences of new students characterizes these institutions. This culture is realized through high-quality instruction, services, and support as well as substantial interaction with students both inside and outside the classroom. Campus leaders nurture this culture and support it by appropriate institutional recognition and rewards. (Campus Culture)

Foundations Institutions facilitate appropriate student transitions beginning with outreach and recruitment and continuing throughout the period of enrollment. They communicate clear curricular/co-curricular expectations and possibilities, and they provide appropriate preparation and support for educational success. They are forthright about their responsibilities to students as well as students' responsibilities to themselves and the institution. These institutions create and maintain communication with secondary and other postsecondary institutions, families, employers, community agencies, and other sources of support for students. (Transitions)

Foundations Institutions serve *all* new students according to their varied needs. These institutions anticipate, identify, and address the needs of traditional and non-traditional students in response to their individual abilities, backgrounds, interests, and experiences. These efforts are subject to assessment and adjustment as needed. Institutions also ensure campus environments that are inclusive and safe for all students. (All Students)

Foundations Institutions ensure that new students experience ongoing exploration of diverse ideas, worldviews, and cultures as a means of enhancing their learning and participation in pluralistic communities. Institutions cultivate an open and civil community in which students interact with people from varied backgrounds and cultures. These institutions guide students to reflect on ideas and values different from those they currently hold, and explore their own cultures and the cultures of others. (Diversity)

Foundations Institutions promote student understanding of the various roles and purposes of higher education and those unique to two-year institutions, both for the individual and society. These roles and purposes include learning for personal growth, career enhancement, workplace preparation and retraining, transfer for additional education, engaged citizenship, and serving the public good. Institutions encourage new students to examine their motivation and goals with regard to higher education in general and to their own college. Students are exposed to the value of both a general education and focused study in an academic or career field. (Roles and Purposes)

Foundations Institutions conduct assessment and maintain associations with other institutions and relevant professional organizations in order to effect improvement. Assessment provides feedback to new students to guide their learning, to faculty to guide their teaching, and to the institution to guide planning, resource allocation, decision making, and improvement of programs and policies. As a way to facilitate improvement, these institutions are knowledgeable about current practices at other institutions as well as relevant research and scholarship. (Improvement)