



## NEWS STATEMENT

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### **“Pathways to Prosperity” Report Distorts the College- and Career - Ready Agenda**

WASHINGTON – February 2, 2011 – Michael Cohen, President of Achieve, reacted today to the Harvard Graduate School of Education’s new report – *Pathways to Prosperity; Meeting the Challenges of Preparing Young Americans for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* which challenges the success of the “college for all” agenda by releasing the following statement:

The *Pathways to Prosperity* report released today contains a number of valuable suggestions and policy recommendations. There is no question that our education system must provide students with well-defined, rigorous career and technical education programs that provide students with engaging learning opportunities, pathways to careers, and meaningful certification. There is certainly much we can learn from the models already in place in many countries.

Unfortunately, the report suggest this discussion is necessary because reformers have been working on a (failed) agenda of “college for all” in which “college” is defined as the pursuit of a four-year degree. It’s important to distinguish the report’s narrow definition of “college” from the one broadly used by those that support the “college and career-ready agenda.” That definition holds that being “college and career ready” means students graduate from high school ready to engage in postsecondary education and training-- from two- and four- year colleges to certificate and apprenticeship programs-- without the need for remediation.

Numerous studies—including Achieve’s American Diploma Project research, studies by ACT, and the research conducted to support the Common Core State Standards show that students need the same level of academic preparation in math and literacy to be successful after high school no matter what path they choose. There is no question that readiness for the wide range of postsecondary education and training programs depends on more than knowledge and skills in English and math, yet these foundational academic skills are considered essential by employers and colleges alike. In fact, many of the excellent multiple pathways programs highlighted in the report are quite clear that their programs demand a high level of academic rigor.

The report also leaves the mistaken impression that the “college for all” agenda has been tried on a grand scale and failed—and even suggests that states saw a decrease in their graduation rates as a result of increased course taking requirements for high school graduation. However, the states referred to in the report had adopted, but not yet implemented, more rigorous graduation requirements. They could hardly be the cause of reduced graduation rates. While it’s true that significant policy changes have occurred in the past decade, those changes are just now being implemented. For example, as of 2010, only four states had graduating classes that were subject to college- and career-ready graduation requirements. It’s far too early to declare defeat.

In fact, it is only now, with the widespread adoption of the Common Core State Standards by over 40 states and a similar number of states working together to develop aligned assessments, that we are even on the verge of truly implementing college and career ready expectations for all students on a large scale. Now is not the time to change course. Instead, we ought to be further exploring how multiple (but equally rigorous) pathways and contextualized learning might get more students the solid academic foundation and skills they need to succeed.

To learn more about Achieve, visit [www.achieve.org](http://www.achieve.org).

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*Created in 1996 by the nation’s governors and corporate leaders, Achieve is an independent, bipartisan, nonprofit education reform organization based in Washington D.C. that helps states raise academic standards and graduation requirements, improve assessments, and strengthen accountability. Achieve is leading the effort to make college and career readiness a national priority so that the transition from high school graduation to postsecondary education and careers is seamless. In 2005 Achieve launched the American Diploma Project Network. Starting with 13 original states, the Network has now grown to include 35 states educating nearly 85 percent of all U.S. public school students. Through the ADP Network, governors, state education officials, postsecondary leaders and business executives work together to improve postsecondary preparation by aligning high school standards, assessments, graduation requirements and accountability systems with the demands of college and careers. Achieve partnered with NGA and CCSSO on the Common Core State Standards Initiative and a number of its staff served on writing and review teams. More recently, Achieve was selected to manage the PARCC assessment consortia. The 25 state PARCC consortia was awarded Race to the Top assessment funds to create next generation assessments in math and English aligned to the CCSS. For more information about the work of Achieve, visit [www.achieve.org](http://www.achieve.org).*