(MUSIC)

FEMALE: In community college, everybody has a true opportunity. But at the end of the day our graduation rates aren’t as high as we want them to be.

MALE: Students graduating with 30, 40 hours more than they needed because they took the wrong class.

MALE: We’re trying to guide students very deliberatively toward their goals.

FEMALE: Guided pathways is an overarching way of looking at the student experience. It’s a big picture, transformational work, and it’s all about student success.

MADISON: I work full time. I work from 6:45am to 3:45pm, and then on a typical day I start class at 4:30 and then end at 9:00 and then try to go home and get maybe about an hour of homework in. My name is Madison Hartman. This is my third year at ACC. It was a struggle for me. Since I have so many classes just before I got to what I actually needed it kind of felt, well, I'm going to graduate with my little nephew who’s six years old, so I might as well stop here. And there was times where I was like it’s not for me. It’s okay. I can do something else. And it was hard.

(MUSIC) (AUSTIN SITES)

CHARLES COOK: Austin is absolutely exploding. It’s booming. On the good side that of course means that there’s lots of opportunities for really good paying jobs. We’re actually working to try to bring students up to a level of skill that they can qualify for the jobs.

(MUSIC)

MADISON: Beginning of college, which was like overwhelming because me and math do not get along. I had to take basic math, I had to take intermedial math and then I had to take elementary math ... just to get to college mathematics. So it was a while before I was able to get to the course that’s actually counted when you transfer. And so it was a struggle for me.

I have a huge headache.

CHARLES COOK: Ten percent of students who began at the lowest level of math were making it into and through college algebra. So we said there’s got to be a better way.

MARISA BJORLAND: So how are you getting the numbers in the table?

FEMALE STUDENT: Subtracting .9.

MARISA BJORLAND: Yeah. So I know when we originally did these problems we did it by finding ten percent and then subtracting. But now we’re saying, well, hey, a faster short cut is just to multiply it by .9. And then six is a good challenge question to see if you can get that connection between a common ratio and the percent change.

MARISA BJORLAND: I think we all realized something was wrong. We grew up learning math from a textbook with a teacher lecturing at the front of the room. And it’s hard for us to imagine that that’s not the way students learn anymore. The best way we can serve them is by trying to engage them through collaborative learning type techniques, you know, having them do the smart hands-on math.

FEMALE STUDENT: The words common ratio always (inaudible). So you can kind of use those like word cues.

MARISA BJORLAND: What operation do we use to get that .8? Multiplying. So by multiplying …

CHARLES COOK: In the old days the concept was that everybody needed college algebra. That was kind of the rite of passage. It reminded me of the turn of the century when everybody had to take Latin and Greek. If you are a psychologist, if you’re a nurse, if you’re a musician, if you’re an artist, even if you’re a computer programmer for the most part, maybe you don’t need college algebra per se. Maybe you need statistics. Maybe you need quantitative reasoning. Maybe you need logic. You know, there are other pathways.

CAROLYNN REED: And so we developed a non-algebraic developmental math course. So we took away one kind of wall that the students were hitting, and we saw a big increase in students getting through with that course.

MADISON: For the first time I can actually say that I enjoyed math class because it’s not your typical what is the distance between the moon and the sun. It’s real life, like you learn about credit cards and you’re APRs and the percentage and how to save, which was really great.

MALE TEACHER: Was it 85 or 80?

FEMALE STUDENT: 85.

MADISON: 85.

MADISON: And I actually did well in that class. I was leading tutoring groups in that class. People were coming to me and it just felt really great to say oh, yeah, I love that class. Let’s go to math. And my confidence is sky rocketing.

MADISON: No budge on three. So like you’re good with 68?

MALE STUDENT: Yeah.

CHARLES COOK: Everybody can learn. It’s hard work. But you know what? We’re here to help you. We’ve got lots of assistance, and we’re going to be there with you every step of the way.

(MUSIC)

CAROLYNN REED: Then we opened the accelerator, and we looked into students on the algebra side. They were still getting stuck in the algebra side. Here we started doing a competency based developmental math course. It would assess and take what they already knew and they wouldn’t have bother with that and they could just focus on the things they didn’t know.

(MUSIC)

CHARLES COOK: The accelerator is the individual approach. You come in, and let’s test you and find out where you are and where you need to go. And let’s figure out how do we get you there as fast as possible, hence the acceleration.

RENE LUMAMPAO: The only problems that they will give you is the ones that you got wrong.

FEMALE STUDENT: Okay.

RENE LUMAMPAO: Lauren, you doing okay? It looks like you got it.

LAUREN: Thank you.

RENE LUMAMPAO: You’re welcome.

RENE LUMAMPAO: The courses I'm doing here is a co-requisite course. Instead of having the typical developmental sequence where they go through a series of courses before they take college algebra, there’s a new movement to try to get both of those together. What I do is I go around, facilitate and give them immediate assistance as needed towards the goal that they meet their developmental math along with getting that timely remediation necessary to be successful in college algebra.

FEMALE STUDENT: That’s seven, so …

RENE LUMAMPAO: You’re aware of the deadline, right?

FEMALE STUDENT: Yes.

RENE LUMAMPAO: So nine days from today, okay. So your goal is to try to get as much of this done as possible.

CAROLYNN REED: The idea is that they’re learning the background information right before they need to use it. So it makes more sense and they remember it. And when we started doing that, we saw two to three times the number of students who were getting through the college-level course. So it’s been very exciting and we’re building on that.

FEMALE TEACHER: They have been meeting for over a year.

CHARLES COOK: Wow.

FEMALE TEACHER: Here in the accelerator. And it’s a conversation class.

FEMALE STUDENT: I'm learning English. I'm a new member.

CHARLES COOK: New member.

FEMALE STUDENT: Yes.

CHARLES COOK: Well, welcome.

FEMALE STUDENT: Thank you.

CHARLES COOK: The best of luck.

FEMALE STUDENT: Thank you.

CURTISS STEVENS: And I’ll see you around, because I always …

FEMALE TEACHER: You always see us.

CURTISS STEVENS: I freaking love this space. I see visible action that helps transform a student. This should be the future. So if I ever became president I would have a college where every class is less like training and more facilitation.

(MUSIC)

CURTISS STEVENS: The people make the place. And one of the coolest things about Austin is the people that’s in the place. They’re progressive. They’re trying to be innovative. They’re trying to deal with equity issues. And, you know, they’re not, we’re not making, we’re not making excuses. Let’s dive in there and try to make it work.

(MUSIC)

MADISON: So I'm going to steal a slogan that ACC actually says. It says start here, get there. And I like it. At first I didn’t know what it meant, but now it’s like it doesn’t matter where you start, it’s how you start and get there and finish.

I'm excited. I'm moving to a four-year university. I'm a little anxious, but for the most part I feel pretty prepared. That’s why I'm glad I started at ACC, just because it gave me, you know, an outlook of what to expect.

(MUSIC)

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