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College of Education

Community College 3.0: What's Next for the Student Success Agenda?

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**2016
DALLAS HERRING LECTURE**

Dear Colleagues:

It is our distinct pleasure to present you a copy of the 2016 Dallas Herring Lecture—“Community College 3.0: What’s Next for the Student Success Agenda?” delivered by Joshua S. Wyner, executive director of the College Excellence Program at the Aspen Institute. The lecture was hosted by the NC State College of Education and Envisioning Excellence for Community College Leadership, an initiative funded by The John M. Belk Endowment to develop a leadership pipeline to community colleges in North Carolina.

In the first half of his lecture, Wyner concisely summarizes the history of community colleges, which for decades emphasized access and more recently refocused on completion. Wyner then shifts to the post-completion agenda, now upon us. This agenda focuses on strong labor market outcomes for technical and post-transfer students alike. Student success, Wyner notes, should be measured not merely by graduation rates but by post-completion outcomes: whether students earn useful labor market credentials, find a job, and earn suitable living wages for their families.

Wyner’s lecture marks an important step forward. It sets the stage for scholar-leaders, practitioners, and policymakers to transition community colleges toward equitable labor market outcomes for students.

His lecture is also part of our ongoing conversation about the opportunities and challenges facing community colleges. We invite you to engage with us on our new blog—the Community College Leadership Blog—where leading practitioners and scholars address a variety of issues surrounding community college excellence and leadership: equity, learning, labor market outcomes, completion, entrepreneurialism, innovation, calculated risk-taking, institutional finance, and more. You can read the blog at envisioningexcellence.ced.ncsu.edu/blog. We also invite you to join us for our third Dallas Herring Lecture, which we will hold Oct. 3 at the Friday Institute on NC State’s Centennial Campus.

NC State’s partnership with the Aspen Institute through Envisioning Excellence for Community College Leadership has strengthened the university’s commitment to North Carolina’s community colleges as they realign practices to achieve strong post-completion outcomes for students.

Thank you for your ongoing support of the NC State College of Education. Together we are redefining success and ensuring students in North Carolina and beyond can Think and Do the Extraordinary.

Cordially,



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About Joshua Wyner

Joshua Wyner is the vice president and executive director of the College Excellence Program at the Aspen Institute, a nonpartisan forum for values-based leadership and the exchange of ideas. The College Excellence Program’s initiatives include the Aspen Prize for Community College Excellence, which shines a spotlight on community colleges that deliver exceptional student results, and the New College Leadership Project, which works to align the hiring and professional development of college presidents with the



goal of substantially improving student success. After several years as a program evaluator and an attorney, Wyner has spent the past two decades as a nonprofit leader working to improve and equalize educational outcomes. He has authored numerous reports, columns, and other publications about education, including the book *What Excellent Community Colleges Do: Preparing All Students for Success*. Wyner holds a Bachelor of Arts in History from Vassar College, a Master of Public Administration from Syracuse University, and a J.D. from New York University School of Law.

“Community College 3.0: What’s Next for the Student Success Agenda?”

Originally envisioned as a means to increase higher education access, community colleges have dramatically expanded over the past century and today serve roughly 10 million students and immensely important societal purposes. Increased recognition of the centrality of these institutions to economic and individual development has, over the past decade, invigorated and expanded a reform movement aimed at improving student success. Until now, the definition of student success has been primarily “college completion,” ensuring that many more community college students attain credentials. That makes sense because, today, most students don’t graduate.

In its next iteration, the community college reform movement must turn its attention to students’ post-graduation success. Doing so will enable community colleges to better

- 1) connect students to their primary goal: having a better life than would have been possible without a college education;
- 2) align community college education with the essential partners that will receive their students after they graduate—universities and employers; and
- 3) streamline community college education through the development of clear and efficient pathways to degrees and other credentials.

If the access mission around which community colleges were founded and expanded was in essence the 1.0 version of the community college, and the completion-focused shifts of the past decade signal version 2.0, this lecture argues that we must now look ahead to version 3.0: community colleges that are fully focused in their missions and practices to the student outcomes after graduation that make community colleges vital to students and communities.

Community college 3.0 will be defined not by abandoning access and completion goals but rather by adding the goal of ensuring that students succeed after graduating as they enter the workforce or transfer to four-year institutions. Making the transition to 3.0 will not be easy. But it is what students and society need. And, it is—as we know from many finalists for the Aspen Prize for Community College Excellence—entirely possible.

Introduction

Over the past decade, thought leaders have increasingly come to understand how vital community colleges are to our nation’s success. When Congress considered where to spend billions of dollars in federal grants to revitalize the economy, much of that investment was directed at community colleges. Unlike his predecessors, President Obama regularly referred to the importance of community colleges in his State of the Union addresses. And major foundations trying to figure out how to accelerate social mobility, close gaps in educational equity, and spur regional and national economic development have increasingly considered community colleges to be a big part of the answer.

To decide to focus on community colleges is smart—but it’s not rocket science. Every year, over 10 million students attend our nation’s community colleges. That’s at least 3 percent of the U.S. population, and nearly half of all U.S. undergraduates. As community colleges have moved into the national spotlight, there has been a greater focus on their performance. Much of this has been driven by recognition across higher education that institutions—not just community colleges—need to reduce costs and increase student success.

Beginning about a decade ago, states and the federal government began setting goals for the number of Americans who hold higher education degrees and other credentials. President Obama, half of all state governments, and two of the largest private philanthropies in the United States that focus on education (Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and Lumina Foundation) have identified specific numbers of credentials they believe Americans need to hold within the coming decade. More recently, states have implemented performance funding systems, which tie public funding for colleges and universities (including community colleges) not just to the number of students enrolled but also to metrics that ensure they are progressing and completing: retention, credit accumulation, and graduation rates. Serious proposals suggest that some federal funding may soon follow suit.

These and other accountability systems invariably translate into a disproportionate focus on community colleges. Why? Because, as federal higher education data show, community college graduation rates are especially low. Of students who have never been to college before and then attend community college full time, only about 30 percent complete a degree or credential within three years. Counting students who leave community colleges without completing an associate’s degree but transfer to a four-year institution and complete a bachelor’s degree, success rates may approach 40 percent. The comparable statistic for four-year colleges and universities is between 55 percent and 60 percent, on average. Given that nearly half of all undergraduates go to community colleges, the success of national and state efforts to increase postsecondary attainment will depend on improvements in community college performance.

New accountability metrics are not the only changes that disproportionately affect community colleges. Constrained state budgets have in recent years resulted in dramatically lower public investments in higher education, and have visited deep cuts on community colleges. In Arizona, two community college systems, including one of the largest in our nation—Maricopa, which serves a quarter million students—receive no state appropriations.

Community colleges face other challenges, too. As the economy recovers and potential students find work instead, enrollments have dropped. The growth of for-profit colleges further threatens enrollment. With wages stagnant for lower-income Americans, many community college students struggle to manage tuition payments and choose to work extra hours, resulting not only in more dropouts but also fewer courses taken by the students who remain in school, which in turn leads to lower completion rates.

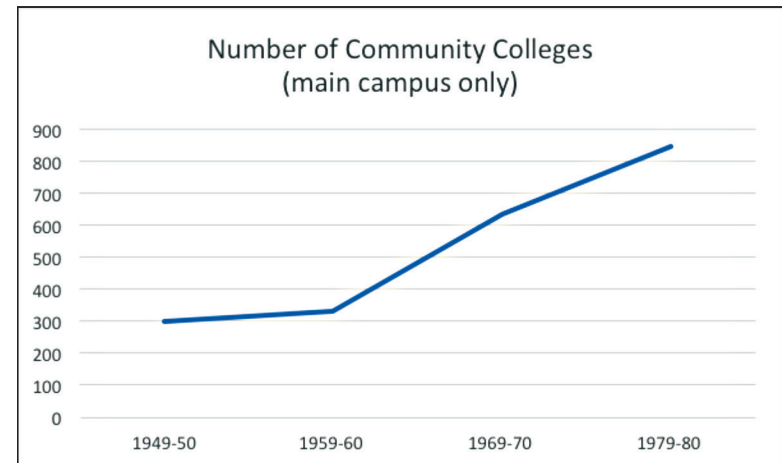
What does this mean for the future? Can we expect community colleges to deliver more with less? Will community colleges be able to serve their students well while meeting the demands of an ever more attentive and demanding public?

Here is the challenge for community colleges over the coming decade and beyond: Can they deliver more degrees of higher quality to a more diverse population without greater public investment?

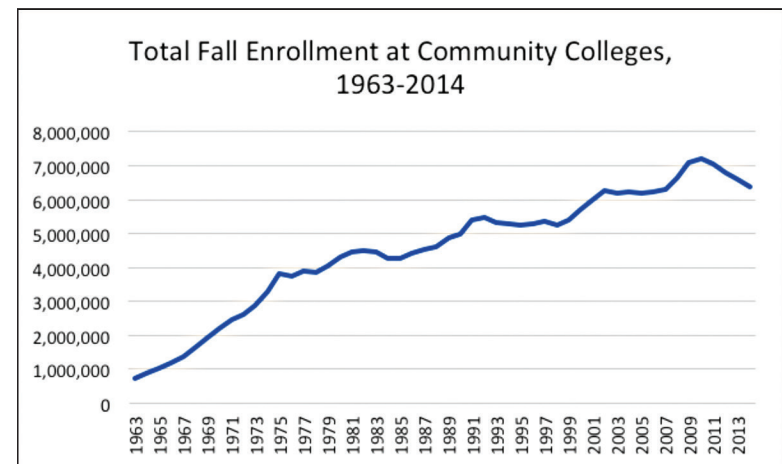
Community College 1.0: Access

Community colleges today serve many functions, but their initial development aimed to fulfill two specific societal purposes. In the first quarter of the 20th century, when the first hundred community colleges were established, they were designed for the most part as junior colleges, a way to provide the first two years of a post-secondary liberal arts education to those who would eventually transfer to a four-year college or university. (A bachelor's degree or higher remains the goal of as many of 80 percent of students who enter community college.) During the Great Depression, community colleges began to be seen also as workforce development agents, training what were then called "semi-professionals" who could provide the talent needed by American industry. Whereas many other Western countries embedded post-secondary workforce training in separate vocational training centers, the United States chose to house workforce training and liberal arts training together, in community colleges.

It is against this backdrop that the post-World War expansion of federal student financial aid dramatically expanded community college enrollments. The boom in enrollments during the post-war decades can be tied to enactment of the federal G.I. Bill and Pell Grant programs (aimed respectively at expanding access for low-income and veteran students) and the enrollment of baby boomers in higher education.



Source: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. *Digest of Education Statistics, 2016. Table 317.10.*



Source: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. *Digest of Education Statistics, 2015. Table 303.25; 2011, Table 199.*

Today's community colleges have been shaped by this history. From the pre-World War II era, we came to understand community colleges as both career and technical education centers and providers of the first two years of a bachelor's degree. From the post-World War II era, we came to embrace community colleges as places to expand access to higher education for those who could not have otherwise gone to college.

While many changes resulted from the expansion of community college access, three in particular came to define the sector in subsequent decades. First, community colleges addressed expanding enrollments by dramatically increasing course and program offerings.

Today, many urban community colleges offer more than 1,000 courses and more than 100 programs of study. It's now thought that this explosion of courses and programs prevents many students from following a clear pathway to degree completion.

Second, with their low cost and lack of admissions standards (for most programs), community colleges became access points for underprepared students who might not otherwise have attended college, which in turn led community colleges to develop robust remedial education programs. In addition, community colleges built programs aimed at serving sets of students who weren't yet prepared for even remedial coursework. This included adult basic education students—those deeply underprepared for higher education and the workforce—as well as English as a second language students.

The third legacy of the expansion in community college access was the influx of young leaders at institutions across the country. Decades ago, many community colleges tapped individuals in their 30s and 40s to serve as a president or provost of a new community college. Now, the young leaders from the 1970s are retiring.

Community College 2.0: Access + Completion

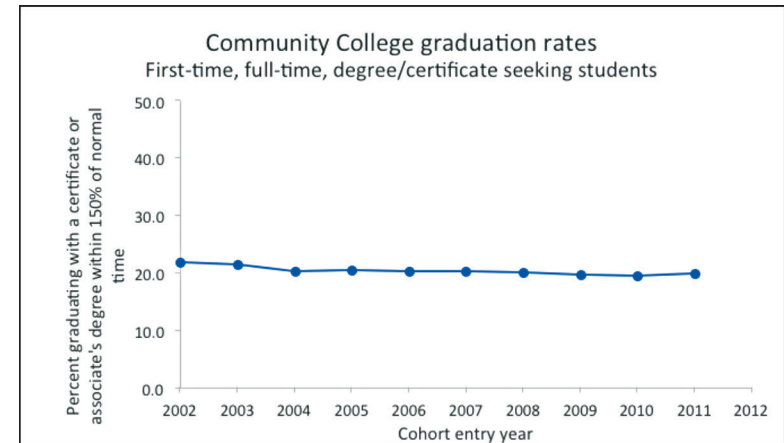
Around the beginning of the 21st century, reformers coalesced around the idea that higher education access without completion is, for most students, a hollow promise. This is an issue especially for community colleges that serve a large number of low-income and minority students, groups that are rapidly growing in our country and tend to have the lowest graduation rates.

Recognizing these unacceptable outcomes, national research, advocacy, and practice organizations were created over the last 20 years with the goal of better understanding the parameters of student success and improving degree and credential completion. In 1996, the Community College Research Center was created at Teachers College at Columbia University. In 2000, the Lumina Foundation was created as the only national foundation with a singular focus on higher education and has since become a national driver of efforts to improve completion anchored in ambitious degree completion goals for which they are holding themselves and their institutional and organizational grantees accountable. The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation followed suit several years later. In 2005, Achieving the Dream was founded with the idea that data-driven practice and leadership would result in higher completion rates.

Not surprisingly, the two core ideas embraced by the reform community flowed directly from the defining legacies of community college version 1.0. The first wave of national completion efforts responded to the dramatic expansion of underprepared students by aiming to improve outcomes in remedial, or developmental, education. Approaches included compressing coursework to accelerate students through the developmental sequence and “contextualizing” developmental education by embedding it in the coursework of degree programs.

It made sense, in the early stages of the completion agenda, to focus on developmental education reforms. Students who enter college underprepared are least likely to succeed. If community colleges were to improve degree completion, they needed to identify and focus on the parts of the pipeline where students struggled most.

Unfortunately, while the theory was sound, the results have not been impressive. Several reforms have resulted in higher rates of students completing developmental course sequences, but not higher rates of degree completion. Despite diligent efforts to enact reforms, backed up by serious-minded efforts to measure impact, American community colleges have not yet significantly increased their production of degrees.



Source: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. *Digest of Education Statistics, 2015. Table 336.20.*

The good news is that the reform community has learned from this limited success. National efforts to improve completion are moving away from those designed to fix developmental education delivery as stand-alone reforms to initiatives designed to improve the student experience from entry through completion. Though developmental education reform is still central to community college efforts to improve student outcomes, it is increasingly tied to a new idea, often called “guided pathways.”

The Role of Guided Pathways in Ensuring Success

Guided pathways respond to the second vestige of community college 1.0: the dramatic expansion of programs and courses. In short, the guided pathways movement seeks both to create clear programmatic pathways of sequenced courses and experiences through community colleges and to reorganize both advising and educational delivery around getting students onto and through those clear pathways.

The rationale for guided pathways is effectively set forth in the book *Redesigning America's Community Colleges* (Bailey, Jagers, & Jenkins, 2015). Under current

conditions, students are faced with too many complex choices about course and program choices with inadequate information or advising to navigate those choices effectively. Moreover, the “cafeteria approach” to course choice—as opposed to well-constructed programs of study—diminishes the likelihood that student learning is either adequately scaffolded or well-aligned to the expectations of different majors at four-year colleges and universities, where most entering community college students aim to transfer.

Evidence suggests that guided pathways work. Aspen Prize winner Lake Area Technical Institute (SD) has achieved 75 percent three-year graduation rates by establishing unified course sequences for roughly 30 programs of study in career and technical fields. More recently established, Guttman Community College in New York City has achieved very impressive retention and graduation rates by following a similar formula in liberal arts programs.

But redesigning America’s community colleges is hard work. Community colleges (like other higher education institutions) often operate as a series of well-intentioned but disconnected silos. Now they are being expected to organize clear pathways in every program of study, help students choose a path early in their college careers, and then organize all faculty and staff advising functions around completion of degrees, rather than completion of courses or simply enrollment.

In many ways, this requires rethinking the internal structure of community colleges. For example, professors who teach in each pathway must agree on which required and elective courses provide the learning outcomes needed for students to complete a degree. That means leaving some courses off the list, even if they have long been in the course catalog. Advising students onto a pathway requires that counselors and advisors reimagine their jobs—they are no longer simply responsible for helping students enroll and pay for whatever courses fit into their busy lives, but must help students identify specific career and transfer goals so that they can choose the right pathway. Keeping students on their chosen pathways requires that faculty monitor student behavior and performance and, as soon as problems start to arise, take steps to reach out to students, while at the same time communicate with professional advisors who can respond with tutoring, counseling, and other academic and nonacademic supports.

This design also requires a new sort of leadership, distinct from much of what has existed in the past. Simply put, it will no longer be adequate for leaders to establish processes that result in common goals for an institution and then allow each department and administrative unit to do its part to incrementally improve student success. Faculty must understand why designing clear pathways is in everyone’s interest, even if the adoption of these pathways may mean that some elective courses are reduced (or even eliminated). Both professional and faculty advisers must be helped to understand that allowing students to do as they want—to do what they have always done—is actually not in students’ best interest.

To build urgency for whole-institution reform, the community college leaders of today and tomorrow must make the case effectively that the college is not delivering what

most faculty and staff believe they have designed. They can do so by combining data on current levels of student success with compelling narratives from students. They must keep their eye on many moving parts and understand how to strategically overcome obstacles—from personnel to finance—while retaining the big-picture view needed to move the institution forward.

The goals of the completion agenda have by no means been met, and community colleges must continue—through efforts like guided pathways—to help students complete credentials in the shortest amount of time and at the lowest cost possible. But we must also recognize that completing credentials for their own sake was never the goal—rather, credentials are signals of the learning that prepares students for success after graduation, either in the labor market or subsequent studies.

Community College 3.0: Access + Completion + Post-Graduation Success

While the completion agenda is important, students don’t go to college to complete degrees. Student surveys are clear: What motivates students most about attending college is that doing so will enable them to have a better life after they graduate—ultimately, a job with good wages.

Accordingly, focusing on post-graduation success will enable colleges to better connect students to the purpose of their education. Research from Davis Jenkins at Columbia University’s Community College Research Center shows a significant positive correlation between students who choose programs of study and better graduation rates. Indeed, the recent focus on building guided pathways is not just about creating clear course sequences in degree programs but also about helping students connect—early in their community college careers—to the direction those pathways represent.

That begs the question: What would motivate students to enter a clear pathway? Why wouldn’t students continue to take sets of disconnected courses that best fit into their busy lives? Excellent colleges have discovered that one of the best ways to help students choose a pathway early in their community college tenure is to show them labor market data so they can decide on programs of study likely to connect them to future success. That means helping student make choices based on where the labor market is going, both in terms of the likely number of open jobs and the wages they can anticipate earning. By focusing students on post-graduation success, community colleges can accelerate program choice, deepen students’ sense of purpose, and in turn improve graduation rates.

A second important reason community colleges should attend to post-graduation outcomes is to ensure that every program that they offer will actually help students. In every regional economy, some skills are in greater demand than others. Not surprisingly, then, at every community college, some degrees confer greater value upon graduates than others. Without focusing on post-graduation success, community colleges would

tend to view every degree and credential as having equal value and produce too few aligned with expanding job opportunities and too many in fields that are contracting, thus depressing both student opportunity and regional economic strength.

This mismatch is likely to be exacerbated by the high cost of delivering some credentials that also offer the greatest value, such as those in allied health professions, advanced manufacturing, energy, and information technology. These can be expensive to deliver due to the high costs of purchasing technical equipment and the effort needed to secure on-the-job training opportunities for students. Nursing requires simulation labs with expensive “dummy” patients that respond like humans and placements with local hospitals in order to be effective; diesel truck and airplane mechanics programs require very sophisticated equipment and supplies. If all credentials are thought to be of equal value and the only consideration is delivery cost, rather than the post-graduation benefits to students, community colleges might not offer valuable middle-skill STEM programs.

A third benefit of focusing on post-graduation success is that community colleges can decipher when their degrees require subsequent higher education to confer significant value for students, and modify their educational delivery and advising goals accordingly. Recent research by American Institutes of Research scholar Marc Schneider demonstrates that many associate degrees in non-technical fields have limited economic value in some labor markets. That does not mean these degrees cannot have value, but rather that they won’t unless combined with a bachelor’s degree. To treat an applied associate degree in welding as identical to an associate of arts in liberal studies makes no sense. One is likely to offer a career with family-sustaining wages while the other is, in most places, valuable only in combination with a bachelor’s degree.

Only by understanding which associate degrees have independent value and which require bachelor’s degree completion can community colleges ensure that they are delivering what students need in the next phase of their lives. Students requiring a bachelor’s degree will, for example, need to be counseled to retain Pell eligibility and hold down loan debt in order to have adequate financial resources to finish their studies. They need to enroll in—and complete—specific courses to ensure that their credits transfer to a four-year university in their major of choice. The education and counseling provided to prospective transfer students must be fundamentally different from that provided to students in “terminal” community college degree programs.

Fourth, paying attention to post-graduation success is necessary if community colleges are to achieve equitable outcomes. While community colleges are generally open-access and low-cost institutions, that is not true for all programs of study. Some programs are more expensive than others; highly technical programs can charge tuition of \$10,000 per year or more. Those same programs often have selective admissions standards, requiring students to have math competencies, for example, at a 12th grade level or higher. Importantly, the same programs that cost more and have selective admissions tend to also have stronger labor market outcomes for graduates.

So what does this have to do with equity? A recent study by Georgetown University’s Anthony Carnevale shows that higher education programs within universities are highly stratified. Minority and low-income students tend to enroll in programs that offer lower labor market value, even within academic departments. It’s likely that the same holds true in community colleges.

For this reason, community college 2.0 is inadequate. The promise of open access, even when combined with completion, will not adequately advance the educational, economic, or equity goals that community colleges were designed to achieve.

Moreover, evidence from state and federal policy strongly suggests that community college 3.0 is what policy-makers will increasingly expect. More and more states are accelerating work on policies designed to smooth the transfer of credits among public institutions, understanding the inefficiency of the current transfer and bachelor’s attainment process for students who start in community college. Ohio has even built transfer success into its financial accountability system for community colleges. Federal gainful employment regulations now attach severe consequences to technical programs that fail to deliver marketable skills. The recently released federal college scorecard features institution-by-institution measures of students’ labor market success. State performance funding systems for two-year technical schools in Wisconsin and Texas condition state funding on labor market outcomes for students after they graduate.

The Work to Be Done to Enact Community College 3.0

It’s clear that we need community college 3.0. So how do we get there? Examples from leading community colleges – including those that have won or been finalists for the Aspen Prize for Community College Excellence— offer some answers.

1. Redefine student success on campus

Some community colleges have intentionally aligned campus cultures, and systems, to the idea that the community college has not succeeded until students have succeeded after graduating. Valencia College in Orlando, Florida, annually looks at detailed reports on bachelor’s degree attainment rates to assess the effectiveness of its pre-transfer liberal arts programs. Walla Walla Community College in Washington State annually looks at employment and earnings outcomes as a central measure of the effectiveness of all programs of study, shutting programs if employment rates or wages suggest that the credential delivered is not more valuable than a high school diploma.

For decades at these and other excellent colleges, faculty and staff were acculturated to traditional measures of effectiveness: strong enrollments and robust (or at least balanced) budgets. Programs had been considered successful, and eligible for more resources, if reports showed that students were enrolled in—and by implication paid for—classes in those programs. Leaders transitioning to community college 3.0 have worked hard to shift mindsets around success. At Valencia, President Sandy Shugart forbade the institutional research office from distributing enrollment reports for a

full year, thus creating the space to refocus on completion, transfer, and bachelor's attainment as measures of success. At Walla Walla, program heads and administrators have, over time, learned to expect that employment and wage outcome data for every program will inform annual decisions on what programs to contract, expand, and close. A process that includes examination of post-graduation success has thus become business as usual.

Community colleges making this shift have in effect dethroned enrollment by insisting that committees and other important decision-making structures focus on both completion and post-graduation experience. So, reports on enrollment and completion rates are joined by regular reports on labor market and transfer outcomes. Time and space is reserved for faculty and staff to analyze strong and weak student outcomes in the post-graduation data. Why are students transferring in large numbers but not getting bachelors' degrees at high rates at two of the community colleges' main four-year partners? Why are students who graduate with degrees in fields that employers say they need still not getting hired? Why are students who get hired not earning more than high school graduates in the region?

Making this shift will not be easy, nor will it happen quickly. After all, community colleges must continue to make sure enrollments are robust, especially considering the 15 percent drop in enrollment over the past five years. And even given the increased focus on improving completion rates, few community colleges have begun to treat completion as important as enrollment. Leaders will need to devise a long-term strategy to deepen the campus-wide commitment to examining data—and devising workable strategies—aimed at improving post-graduation success without overwhelming staff and faculty or distracting them from the often incomplete work of improving completion.

2. Engage four-year colleges and universities in improving transfer and bachelor's attainment

Community colleges that have achieved strong transfer success for students—both in terms of the number of students transferring to four-year schools and the rates at which those students attain bachelor's degrees—have done so in close collaboration with four-year universities. Successful transfer requires the development of clear program maps that span two- and four-year colleges. Detailed course sequences and extracurricular activities are mapped by the four-year university with specific information about acceptable equivalent courses at the two-year level, so that transfer students can enter their junior year fully up to speed in their major. Transfer-focused advising systems are aligned not just with the general idea of transfer but with the goal of ensuring that every student selects transfer destinations and majors as early as possible in their community college career and has a plan to fund four years of college, not just two.

Research shows that transfer students lose far too many credits because two- and four-year schools have not worked well to align expectations across four-year degree programs. Solving this problem must be guided by and measured against a set of goals

and clear measures aligned to student success that are shared by two- and four-year partners. How many students transfer from two- to four-year schools, and in what programs of study? How many credits transfer, and how many more will be needed to finish their bachelor's degree? How long does it take for students to finish their bachelor's degree from the time they transfer? From the time they start community college? Only if community colleges commit to post-graduation success as part of their mission will they dig into these important questions and take action based on what they learn.

3. Engage employers in defining common goals for talent development

Many community colleges have developed strong relationships with multiple employers by delivering well-trained workers and receiving advice about future workforce needs. Much of the work with employers, however, is program-based, with advisory committees of employers periodically advising program leads on changes that might be made. Community colleges enacting version 3.0 have transitioned their labor market analysis and engagement efforts from programmatic efforts to institution-wide strategies. Importantly, program review processes happen annually—rather than on the typical three- to five-year cycle—and include investigation of labor market outcomes. Such is the case at Indian River State College in Port St. Lucie, Florida, where annual program reviews in advanced manufacturing, nursing, utility maintenance, and other fields that offer strong job prospects for students include rigorous analysis of employment and earnings data. Decisions about what programs to offer and what to teach in those programs result in strong wages for graduates who, five years after graduating, earn an average of 20 percent more than the average wage in the college's region.

At effective community colleges, regular examination of labor market trends and post-graduation student employment outcomes inform conversations between employers and community college program leaders. Over time, this can result in the kind of trusting relationship that yields employer investments in equipment, scholarships, and other community college needs that substantially subsidize the cost of delivering more expensive career tech programs. Lake Area Technical Institute in Watertown, South Dakota, was given a 727 aircraft by FedEx for students to work on because the company so valued the quality of airplane mechanics the college produced. Brazosport College in Lake Jackson, Texas, receives state-of-the-art equipment from Dow Chemical and BASF because they depend on the college to train workers for well-paying jobs in process technology. Building and maintaining these relationships so that students have strong employment opportunities depends on community colleges regularly measuring their success by their students' employment and wages after graduating.

4. Align student advising systems to post-graduation goals

When improving access was the primary mission, community colleges developed systems to ensure that students had adequate financial aid and advising systems to register for courses. As the focus has shifted to include completion, policies and

systems have shifted as well. For example, during the era of community college 1.0, allowing students to register late for classes seemed like a good idea because it enabled more students to take courses even if they were unaware of deadlines or procrastinated. As completion goals were adopted, many colleges ended the practice, because students who registered late for courses were less likely to succeed in them. As completion efforts have evolved to include guided pathways, the goal is now selection of a program of study as early as possible, requiring that the advising processes once again change.

As post-graduation success is added to the list of goals, these systems will need to be rethought once again. When advising students on which pathway to take, it is not enough to guide students toward any pathway. They need to be guided to those programs that maximize their chances for post-graduation success.

Community colleges that effectively provide such guidance help students understand the specific employment opportunities and wages available in certain professions and then counsel students toward guided programs of study with strong employment and earnings potential. If the pathway students choose will require a bachelor's degree (or more education) in order to enter a career with wages that can sustain a family, advising conversations shift to planning the semester-by-semester courses and other educational experiences needed not just to complete an associate degree, but rather a bachelor's degree. While the level of student's education-related debt in community colleges is not very high, taking on student loans while in community college may deter some students from funding the added cost associated with earning a bachelor's degree. Accordingly, financial aid advising for students who intend to transfer should consider the entire cost of a bachelor's, not just the cost of an associate's degree.

Not all of the changes in institutional policy and practice required when colleges adopt post-graduation success goals require increased expenditures. Some may in fact save community colleges money. Strong community college partnerships with four-year universities can lead to the hiring of full- or part-time transfer advisors who work on two-year campuses but are paid by four-year partners. Community colleges have received state funds to fully pay for new facilities in high-demand job sectors because college leaders went arm-in-arm with employers to make the case for the investment, using data about labor market trends developed in partnership with those employers.

5. Reorient leadership

Above all else, achieving the goals of community college 3.0 will require a new kind of leadership. When access was the primary mission, strong enrollment numbers and balanced budgets were the primary measures of success, not just for community colleges but for the presidents who led them. Community colleges that have embraced a completion agenda have leaders who understand how to create urgency among faculty, administrators, and staff around retention and completion rates, and lead processes in which scaled and sustainable reform can take place across the college. If post-graduation success is now to take center stage, community college presidents

must work to ensure that everyone at the college understands that the college's vision and goals are centered on employment with family-sustaining wages and successful transfer, and that those goals will be accompanied by specific measures of success.

For several reasons, leading this transition will be difficult. First, there are only so many measures of success that an institution can adopt in any given period. College leaders who are still trying to acclimate their institutions' cultures to the notion that momentum and completion matter as much as access have to think carefully about how to add post-graduation success goals without distracting faculty, staff, administrators, and even the board of directors from the shift that is needed to achieve completion goals. Moreover, post-graduation success is less proximate to the education community colleges provide than are measures of course completion or even degree completion. It may be two or three years (at best) before the typical community college student will complete a bachelor's degree after leaving community college, and at least that long before a community college can assess whether students who have left have gotten a foothold in the labor market. In these and other ways, acculturating community colleges to the idea that outcomes stretching years after a student has departed will be a challenge that requires thoughtful and strategic change management over multiple years.

The good news is that, as reflected in the examples noted earlier, community college leaders around the country have led such transformations. In each case, they espoused an aspirational vision of institutional success that included students' post-graduation success. They ensured that regular data reports on post-graduation success became part of processes for evaluating the success of all programs and initiatives. And they created time and space for their senior teams to consider the strengths and weaknesses of student success after those students leave some particular programs, when entering specific professions or when transferring to programs at four-year universities.

Conclusion

Too much energy is being put into the completion agenda to see it abandoned as a goal anytime soon—nor should it be. More and more state systems are adopting performance funding for their community colleges that are based on degree and certificate completion. Enlightened community college leaders are using the completion agenda to drive reforms on their campuses that unquestionably improve student success. In the end, the completion agenda has proven essential to efforts aimed at aligning community college practice with higher levels of student success.

At the same time, moving to community college 3.0—a commitment to not just student success at the college but also beyond it—will be essential if community colleges are to meet the needs of increasingly diverse students and of regional economies while at the same time satisfying the growing demands of state legislators and governors without the benefit of additional resources.

About Dr. Dallas Herring & The Power of Education

Dr. W. Dallas Herring made it his life's work to build a system that would serve all of North Carolina's residents by preparing them for productive work and active citizenship. As a teenager, he established a 75-book community library in the local general store of Rose Hill, his home town. He later developed a statewide system of technical education institutes that eventually became the North Carolina Community College System. He also served for 20 years as chair of the North Carolina State Board of Education. Throughout his career, he was always guided by his vision of educational "opportunity for all the people."



Please consider powering education with a gift to honor Herring or to support the College of Education's research and scholarship.

Gifts can be made in the following ways:

By Check: Please make checks payable to the "NC State Foundation" with a memo notation that it is for the "William Dallas Herring Professorship Endowment, 077000" or the "College of Education Excellence Fund, 140158"

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NC State College of Education's faculty, staff, students, and alumni Think and Do the Extraordinary. They transform lives and communities across North Carolina and beyond through the research they conduct; the professionals they develop; the students they teach, counsel, and mentor; the schools they lead; and the initiatives they spearhead that span the entire pre-K to higher education spectrum. They share a vision to ensure the educational success of all North Carolinians and to reduce achievement gaps.

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