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Leadership and Research

Insights from the Pandemic:
The Reckoning and the Hope at Our Nation's Community Colleges

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President
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2020 Dallas Herring Lecture
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2020 DALLAS HERRING LECTURE

Dear Colleagues,

We are pleased to share with you the full transcript of the 2020 Dallas Herring Lecture, delivered by Dr. Pam Eddinger, president of Bunker Hill Community College in Massachusetts and chairperson of Achieving the Dream. This year's lecture was delivered on a virtual platform that provided us the opportunity to expand our reach across the country with over 1,400 colleagues registering to listen, learn, and engage. Through this signature program, we are honored to continue W. Dallas Herring's legacy to develop and sustain exceptional community college leaders and NC State's commitment to execute its chartered mission as a land-grant institution to serve the citizens of our state. We would like to thank Dr. Jemilia Davis of the Belk Center for the support she provided for coordinating the 2020 Dallas Herring Lecture and this booklet.

Dr. Eddinger's lecture, entitled "Insights from the Pandemic: The Reckoning and the Hope at our Nation's Community Colleges," was a timely message for community college educators and advocates near and far. The lecture reflected on her insights gained from the COVID-19 Pandemic as the president of the largest community college in the Massachusetts system making a personal claim to bearing witness to the wear and tear experienced by our education systems that she has helped to strengthen. Dr. Eddinger's lecture acknowledges the simultaneous reckoning and hope that signals the need for transformation and a new "social contract with the people." Dr. Eddinger emboldens us to ensure a just and equitable recovery and strengthen the community college's identity as a hub. She encourages us to know our students, dismantle negative narratives, identify cultural wealth, recognize #realcollege as a contemporary higher education, know who you are in your guidance, and assemble a hub and culture for collaboration.

To close, she captures the essence of her lecture in this notable quote:

> *Like a flash of lightning in the night, the Pandemic revealed all the cracks and fissures hidden in the landscape, and gave us a stark and unsparing look at the cavernous wealth and attainment gap before us, in our Black and brown urban communities, in the immigrant communities, and in our poor white communities in the rural regions. While the struggles of these communities are not new to educators in the field, the depth of the needs, as well as their systemic and entrenched nature, now shapes and informs a national conversation as never before.*

At the conclusion of the program, we heard from four community college presidents as respondents to Dr. Eddinger's lecture: President Avis Proctor of Harper College in Illinois, President Kandi Deitemeyer of Central Piedmont Community College in North Carolina, and President William Serrata of the El Paso County Community College District in Texas. We invite you to watch the 2020 Dallas Herring Lecture program that provoked an engaging conversation across the country at go.ncsu.edu/DHL2020. After watching, we encourage you to connect with us in continued dialogue around the "reckoning and hope" at our community colleges. We thank the John M. Belk Endowment for their continued support of the Belk Center and North Carolina's community colleges.

Cordially,

Mary Ann Danowitz
Dean,
College of Education
Professor

Audrey J. Jaeger
Executive Director,
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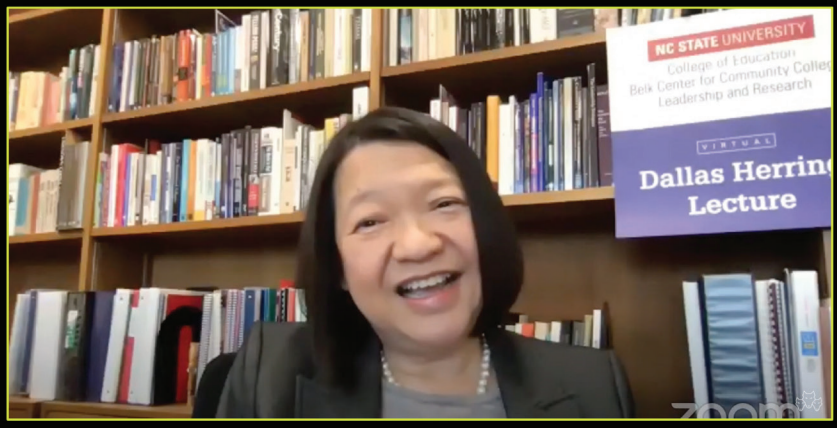
W. Dallas Herring Professor



About Pam Eddinger

Pam Eddinger, Ph.D., is president of Bunker Hill Community College, the largest of 15 community colleges in Massachusetts. She began her tenure at Bunker Hill in 2013 and previously served as president Moorpark College in Southern California.

Eddinger's service in community colleges spans more than 25 years, with senior positions in academics and student affairs, communications and policy and executive leadership. In addition to the chairpersonship of the community college national reform network Achieving the Dream, Eddinger serves on a number of boards and commissions, including the New England Commission of Higher Education, WGBH Boston, the Boston Foundation, the Massachusetts Workforce Development Board and Boston Private Industry Council. Eddinger was honored in 2016 by the Obama Administration as a Champion of Change. She earned a bachelor's degree in English from Barnard College in New York City and her masters and doctorate in Japanese literature from Columbia University.

"Dr. Herring's faith in human potential never waned. In a 1987 interview conducted by journalist James "Jay" Jenkins, himself a stalwart in the world of North Carolina higher education, Herring asked politicians not to underestimate the poor and the underserved, for "these are human beings with immense capacity for creative contribution to the progress of civilization," Eddinger said as she opened the 2020 Dallas Herring Lecture.

"It is in Dallas Herring's abiding belief in the potential of all beings to contribute to the progress of humankind, regardless of origin and regardless of status, that I offer this lecture today."

The 2020 Dallas Herring Lecture:
Insights from the Pandemic: The Reckoning and the Hope at Our Nation's Community Colleges

Thank you for your invitation to deliver the William Dallas Herring Lecture, named for a visionary who was instrumental in the formation of the North Carolina Community College System. When I researched the life of W. Dallas Herring, I found his 1966 speech to the North Carolina Legislature and it resonated deeply with me. It is a speech that would be as relevant and urgent in our state houses today:

> *The only valid philosophy for North Carolina is the philosophy of total education; a belief in the incomparable worth of all human beings, whose claims upon the state are equal before the law and equal before the bar of public opinion; whose talents (however great or however limited or however different from the traditional) the state needs and must develop to the fullest possible degree. That is why the doors to the institutions in North Carolina's system of community colleges must never be closed to anyone of suitable age who can learn what they teach. We must take the people where they are and carry them as far as they can go within the assigned function of the system.* [1]

Dallas Herring's faith in human potential never waned. In a 1987 interview conducted by journalist James "Jay" Jenkins, himself a stalwart in the world of North Carolina higher education, Herring asked politicians not to underestimate the poor and the underserved, for "these are human beings with immense capacity for creative contribution to the progress of civilization." [2]

It is in Dallas Herring's abiding belief in the potential of all beings to contribute to the progress of humankind, regardless of origin and regardless of status, that I offer this lecture today.

Community Colleges Before the COVID-19 Pandemic

My talk with you today is about insights gained from the COVID-19 pandemic. Over the past eight months, I have witnessed the disintegration of systems and values I have worked to strengthen in community colleges over the last quarter century. I have seen my students and their communities in desperate straits, seemingly put there overnight. These observations prompted much painful reflection, and eventually, research into the reasons for systemic failures in multiple sectors supporting the communities. The failures are heartbreaking, and the history of them even darker. Yet, as I traced the progress of

community colleges during past decades, I came to recognize once again the unwavering commitment of community college educators and the deep courage of our students in the face of mounting barriers. Through the darkness of the pandemic and the clouded history of racism and systemic deprivations, I witnessed not only the power of the Community College Student Success Movement, but the emergence of a new transformation: a transformation that promises a new vision of community in community college, and a new social contract with the people we serve.

To put my observations and my journey into context, we might travel back to a moment before the pandemic, and what now feels like "the before times." The Community College Student Success Movement and its mission-driven research was a dominant force. So let's review by answering the following: What were our burning questions in the field? What drove research, theories of change and praxis? Against what backdrop did we enter the complex experience that was the last eight months? How has responding to the pandemic changed our understanding?

I would suggest that two related lines of inquiry dominated our thoughts, captured here in two research questions:

- How can we improve student persistence and increase degree completion?
- How can we close the achievement gaps for our marginalized populations?

The Community College Student Success Movement has grappled with these two areas of inquiry for more than two decades. It has produced a number of different conceptual frameworks and analyses resulting in an abundance of pedagogical and technical solutions, from assessment and accountability in the early 2000s to the College Scorecard and Completion Agenda of the Obama administration in the following decade to the more recent introduction of the Guided Pathways concept.

At the heart of this research, conducted by some of you in this audience, is an aspiring vision that has animated the lives and work of scholars and practitioners throughout

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community colleges nationally. It reflects our long-standing mission and speaks to the optimism that guides our collective belief that all students have the potential to learn and to succeed. It sets the expectation that the attainment gap is bridgeable between white, economically advantaged students and students at the margins; that students of color, first generation students and students caught in generational poverty in both our urban centers and in our rural communities can achieve academic success. It also implies a promise — a social contract — that academic success will lead to social and economic mobility, and that social and economic equity is imaginable and reachable. The solutions to these questions of engagement, completion and achievement are what stand between us and lives transformed.

The urgency of the Community College Student Success Movement was also fueled during the last decade by the pressing need for an educated workforce to meet the demands of an information- and technology-driven economy. Three-quarters of the jobs in the U.S. in this decade and the next will require some post-secondary education. Community colleges have become the logical institution for workforce education and training to ensure the global competitiveness of our nation. We are the place to prepare students for the "new collar," middle-skills, sustainable-wage jobs. That is, if we can solve the two questions posed above: Will students complete? Can we close the attainment gap?

As the Student Success Movement grew, its research into the factors affecting student performance provided data that suggested a significant mismatch between who our students are and the systems being used to measure their success. It also suggested that this mismatch contributes to a false narrative about community college performances and the students themselves. The mistaken expectation that community colleges simply replicate the first two years of a traditional four-year education, and that students behave and live similarly to traditional undergrads, skewed performance metrics and cast community colleges into a deficit narrative. It is not until the mid-2010s, as the Student Success Movement matures, that we begin to examine more deeply the question of "who are our students?" which in turn shifts our inquiry into one of institutional readiness: What do we have to do differently as an institution to ensure that our marginalized students complete? What barriers do we have to dismantle to erase the attainment gap?

Yet, the deficit language continues to be powerful. Listen to how questions are asked and the assumptions built in to them:

- Why do three-quarters of community college students fail to complete within two years?
- Why do our Black and Latino male students lag behind white students?
- Why do our Pell-eligible students lag behind non-Pell students?
- Why do our developmental education students fail to reach college level?
- How often do English learners make it through multiple levels of ESL to English 101?

The phrasing of these questions implies that students are the focus of the deficit and are not college-ready. Even as the field shifts its critical lens to the readiness of the institutions, the deficit narrative never quite leaves the conversation.

"What do we have to do differently as an institution to ensure that our marginalized students complete? What barriers do we have to dismantle to erase the attainment gap?"

Later in my talk, I will interrogate the formation of the deficit narrative and its intractable nature as we examine historical factors that shaped higher education. This deficit narrative, added to a series of unrealistic expectations about college readiness and economic mobility, becomes the basis of a double bind; one that traps our students in mismatched expectations and our educators in a constant battle for student success under measures that are barely achievable because of funding constraints.

Researching these core questions required that we refine our data gathering and analysis. The concept of a culture of evidence emerged and took hold during the early 2000s. A prime example of this powerful strategy is the formation of the reform network, Achieving the Dream (ATD), in 2004. At the time of its formation, ATD focused relentlessly on the attainment gaps of marginalized populations and Black students, and the importance of disaggregated data in supporting difficult reform conversations. These difficult dialogues informed research and fostered curricular innovations and better pedagogical practices. Field-transforming work from research centers such as the Community College Research Center (CCRC) at Columbia University and others across the country changed the face of developmental education over the next decade.

Data-driven decision making and data-informed program development became common practice. Expertise on data use in the field expanded, and the Student Success Movement entered an extraordinarily vibrant period. The anxiety over the student achievement gap and the desire for reform rose with each call for college accountability, for workforce development and for social and economic mobility. President Obama established the College Completion agenda in 2009 to increase credential completion amongst 25- to 34-year-olds to 60% by 2020 and convened the first White House Summit on Community Colleges in 2010.

Even though the White House was serious about increasing college participation, the lack of understanding about community college students and post-traditional students shaped the tenor of these research agendas. I remember being invited to a White House

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convening with over 100 higher education leaders to discuss college access. As the conversation turned to "undermatching," the phenomenon of high-achieving students from underserved communities not applying to the selective colleges, I looked around the room to find only four presidents from community colleges, a sector that serves almost 50% of our undergraduates. It was a startling moment of realization that, as concerned as these leaders were about access, these colleagues from senior colleges and selective institutions do not have a wide enough context, nor the right lens, to focus on the real struggle of increasing college participation.

Increased national attention on the important role of community colleges fueled the Student Success Movement, increased demand for accountability metrics and increased federal, state and foundation dollars. Frameworks and solutions for retention, completion and closing the achievement gap flooded and enriched the field: ATD, Complete College America, Completion by Design, the American Association of Community Colleges 21st Century Commission, Guided Pathways, Jobs for the Future's Student Success Centers, Texas' own version of Student Success Centers, CCRC's prolific research agenda and the many national foundations that funded research, promising practices and scale-ups in order to shape higher education policies.

Many of these efforts shaped our local practices. As recently as a month ago, my annual institutional evaluation for the Massachusetts Department of Education had a special section entitled the "Big Three: Metrics of Retention, Completion, and Closing the Achievement Gap." The data are now analyzed through the lens of equity, with data disaggregated for race/ethnicity, gender and Pell eligibility.

Despite substantive funding from national foundations and great efforts in the field, the needle moved only modestly during the first decade. In deliberating the reason for the lack of substantial progress, the field concluded that we needed better metrics. Measurement systems originating from the four-year college framework such as IPEDS (Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System) is not nuanced enough to articulate the progress of community college students. Our students are different, we would argue. They are part-time; they progress along a longer arc; they are succeeding and we are not measuring the right way.

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It took a long time to convince the policymakers that there is validity in these observations. The false narrative is a stubborn one that paints community college students as incapable of rigorous academics and implies that there is something fundamentally lacking that must be mended. Stigma followed the false narrative, which flowed from the flawed metrics. The field began to rally behind the more attuned Voluntary Framework of Accountability (VFA). The VFA measures student progress at 300% of time-to-completion: a six-year metric to measure the two-year associate degree. The results look slightly more positive from a six-year lens. In 2017, IPEDS began counting part-time students, adult students and Pell recipients. This was a major milestone in recognizing that the American undergraduate is not monolithic; we are paying better attention to the identities and characteristics of our students. But the inroads here were meager and not sufficient to fully reverse the narrative.

Over the past two decades, the field has collaborated, and sometimes competed, to find strategies to close the attainment, perhaps better termed, the equity gap. We have invested in everything from professional development for teaching and learning to growing the next generation of leadership, more focused data analyses, targeted case management and advising, technology-enhanced predictive analytics, technology-enhanced services and supports.

We now have intentional and more penetrating use of data and significant funding from public and private sources, and yet, we have made only modest progress. Robustly funded programs like the City University of New York Accelerated Study in Associate Programs (CUNY ASAP), that attend to multiple dimensions of student needs, moved ahead of the reform pack.

A most valuable insight from this period (and a most frustrating one) is the critical understanding that the community college is deeply entangled with social, racial and economic forces, and the effects of these systems are interdependent and impossible to tease apart. The context of student success is wider than the classroom and the academic environment. Therefore, reform efforts borne of a narrow understanding of these interdependent forces have not been completely successful. The programs that showed remarkable progress, like ASAP, required not only robust and consistent funding, but intentional and integrated strategies to dismantle barriers for students; barriers that are created by the dysfunctional but interlinked systems.

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The Stark Lesson of COVID-19 and Necessity of the Community College Hub

It was in the midst of this push for answers about student attainment, and in the progression of our understanding about the factors affecting student success, that the COVID-19 pandemic came on the scene in March 2020. Like a flash of lightning in the night, the pandemic revealed all the cracks and fissures hidden in the landscape and gave us a stark and unsparing look at the cavernous wealth and attainment gap before us in our Black and Brown urban communities, in the immigrant communities of our Gateway Cities and in our poor white communities in the rural regions. While the struggles of these communities are not new to educators in the field, the depth of the needs, as well as their systemic and entrenched nature, now shapes and informs a national conversation as never before.

"When the pandemic hit, the needs were immediate, but the deprivations have been long standing."

The systemic deprivations predicated on race, on class and on the persistent choice of private profit over public good has eroded our social contract. The optimism that fuels the mission of community colleges is obscured by the dismantling of social contracts in related sectors, in elementary and secondary education, in housing and transportation, in public health, in generational care. The hope of community colleges in lifting our students above the attainment gap, in restoring their social privilege and speeding their economic mobility, becomes fainter when the support network is frayed in so many other places. The lightning bore witness to its disintegration in the hometowns of our students. Bunker Hill Community College, located by the north bank of the Charles River, serves students from Boston and the five Gateway Cities in the greater metropolitan area. Like many large urban community colleges, 77% of our students fall within the two lowest quintiles of income; generational poverty is common. Three quarters of the students work, many full time. Three out of five are parents, half of the parents are single mothers. Last surveyed three years ago, 54% are food insecure; 14% are homeless. Our students are adults, taking care of families, and while they know

higher education is their path to economic and social mobility, college is not at the center of their lives. They are family strong and economically fragile; when money runs short, college gives way to family, jobs and the urgency of survival. They walk a tightrope with courage, balancing daily survival and the aspiration for economic advancement.

When the pandemic hit, the needs were immediate, but the deprivations have been long standing. When the students tried to lean on the social and economic safety nets in the community, they found them in tatters. The causes have been well enumerated over the past months. Structural racism and the systemic disinvestment in communities of the marginalized show up in ways big and small during this crisis. The college tries hard to insulate our students from the catastrophic stresses, but the basic infrastructure for adequate public health and public education is unsound.

Many of our students are also low-wage, frontline, essential workers, as well as first responders and entry-level healthcare workers. Their jobs made them susceptible to infection, and further eroded their resilience as we weathered the outbreak. It is no accident that COVID-19 hotspots in Massachusetts and elsewhere coincided with our communities of color served by our colleges, where poor public health and public education outcomes are intertwined. [3]

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As much as the COVID-19 lightning has revealed the failure of the social and economic systems in serving our communities of poverty and communities of color, it has also shown us a radical transformation in the nature of community college, one that deserved greater acknowledgement and certainly provides hope for the next stage of student success work. Community colleges have evolved over the last decades to compensate for the systemic disinvestment, and in doing so changed the scope of its promise to the community.

In its deep concern with poverty and its inequitable effects on students, community colleges have built infrastructure on their campuses over time to compensate for the lack of support resources in individual families and in the community. We built libraries and study commons, computer labs with wifi, dining commons, clinics, food pantries, community gathering spaces, offices of emergency services, emergency housing, mental health counseling and many other social services that kept our students connected.

Community college education is no longer a stand-alone educational enterprise. Please allow me to use Bunker Hill as an extended example. With our promise of open access,

and the availability of physical, social and cultural support infrastructure, we are the social and education hub for our communities. The importance of physical and social support built into the college environment was validated in March when we learned how devastating and disruptive it was for students when we closed our physical campuses. Without a place to call "home," students were adrift. We were deeply worried that our students, who have amassed so much courage and risked so much socially and economically to come to us, would leave the college for good if they were cut off from our hub for an extended period of time, particularly under the multiple stresses of the pandemic. Our focus was to restore as much of the hub as we could in a virtual environment.

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Initially, when we pivoted 1,700 sections of classes from on-ground to virtual, we scrambled to provide students with wifi, Chromebooks, and laptops. We delivered 700 pieces of computer equipment. As I write, our IT shop is exploring the extension of wifi out to our parking lots and our athletic fields, so students can have internet connections.

We had to physically close our food pantry, so we partnered with a nonprofit to deliver 40 orders of groceries a week to students' homes, and mailed grocery store gift cards to those outside the delivery zone. We hoped to stave off food emergencies, but we know that basic needs of food and housing are frequently not met.

We worried about the physical and mental health of our students and how they are caring for their home-schooled children as they struggle with their own studies. We understood when students refused to turn on their Zoom camera in class because they were embarrassed about their home environment.

As reported by our faculty, close to 800 students went silent once we pivoted to remote learning. Our survey with these students told us that logistical challenges, the digital gap and the separation from social support are among the main reasons for their disengagement. We noted that for our young Black men, the disengagement is even more drastic, with an additional 20% gap compared to the rest of the surveyed group. We reached out with peer advisors almost immediately to re-establish the connection. Unlike the more privileged, traditional four-year undergraduate, who may consider a gap year during the pandemic, our students are undertaking a journey that is high-risk, and likely a one-time investment.

Our college was also determined that this crisis would not mar an otherwise proficient academic record for a student. The academic record for our students is a personal

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narrative and social capital that they can control, particularly when it tells of extraordinary resilience and merit against the odds. Setting aside the unfairness of having to prove exceptional merit just to glean an education, the danger of derailing years of good performance with a sudden drop in GPA is real, particularly for those considering transfer or merit-based plans. It does not take much to disrupt a learner's journey: a sick child, a lost job, a bad wifi connection. So we temporarily changed financial and academic policy to give them more time and space to acclimate and to complete. We included a pass/fail option, an incomplete option with summer support and a longer withdrawal period. We were determined that one moment of academic disarray would not undermine the record of their achievements in the long term.

As did Bunker Hill, community colleges across the nation have picked up the burden as a social service and education hub to further economic mobility, yet the systematic defunding of public higher education, which began over a decade ago with the Great Recession, has stripped what were already meager budget appropriations. In the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, we have yet to be restored to pre-2008 funding levels despite the recovery of the economy since. The community college system in Massachusetts and nationwide will likely be weakened further as the economy struggles to recover, and state budgets are reduced. The need to shoulder the high cost for keeping displaced students equipped and engaged, however, continues to mount.

The common perception, even amongst the well-informed, is that community colleges rank in rigor, effectiveness and prestige behind the elite universities, the public universities and the state colleges. The funding level has certainly followed that troubling hierarchy. Yet it should be unmistakable that, if we are concerned at all about college attainment, workforce readiness, defeating poverty, and most immediately, a just and equitable recovery, community colleges are critical. A just and equitable recovery must speak to the restoration of the economic and social support infrastructures within communities of color and of poverty that have been eroded by systematic disinvestment. The restoration, moreover, must be sustained with strategies that ensure cultural identities and future prosperity without prejudice. No other sector has a better chance to achieve equity, economic vibrancy and social justice. It has been a long game as we watch the federal government and the states, one waiting for the other to take substantive funding action to shore up the community colleges. With these burdens, both historic, immediate, and long-term, it is no surprise that our students and our colleges are breaking under the weight.

The College Mobility Narrative and the Double Bind

Beyond the immediate social and economic challenges of our students, the pandemic forced us to examine another important narrative in the world of higher education, one that many of us have grown up with professionally. This narrative says: "There is a hierarchy in higher education, with the ivies plus on the top end, and the community colleges at the base." If individuals have talent and merit, they can climb to the top. The arrival is a triumph of both grit and moral character, particularly if you are poor, particularly if you are a person of color. This narrative carries a biased judgment equating the impoverished physical environment to the moral characteristics of a community. The arrival of the student after the "climb" is at once a rejection, a leaving behind, of an unwanted status and physical environment, and an affirmation of the class system within the higher education sector. For the self-reflective learner, their climb and eventual arrival is often steeped in ambivalence as they weigh the value of their own lived experiences and cultural worth against a system of merit that discards and devalues their community origin. This storyline of merit and arrival is further reinforced by an adjacent narrative that celebrates the rewards of higher education in job and economic advancement.

The reverse narrative, unfortunately, is also alive and well. It suggests that, should you fail to partake in college, you are without ambition; should you fail to ascend, you are without merit; should you fail to advance economically due to the first two failures, it signals a flaw in your character; should this persist over generations, the flaws are ascribed to families and communities. We find examples past and present in this apocryphal portrayal, mostly racialized and gendered. From Ronald Reagan's Welfare Queens, to unwed mothers on SNAP and immigrants overburdening the public charge, the attitude of the American public regarding the poor is woven tightly into the sector of higher education.

These unspoken tenets form a set of simplistic higher education mobility narratives that were created by some of the most important education legislations after World War II. The vice president of the national nonprofit Jobs for the Future (JFF), Michael Collins, points to the GI Bill of 1944, the Truman Commission Report of 1946 and the Higher Education Act (HEA) of 1965 as three potentially transformative opportunities for broadening college access to people of color and people marginalized by poverty and class status. The intent of these legislations to boost college access and home ownership

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created what Collins called the higher education mobility narrative, an aspirational motif that continues to animate the mission of contemporary community colleges.[4] Yet this narrative has not held true for Blacks, for people of color or for people in poverty. The racist and prejudicial attitudes of the day precluded GI Bill participation of Blacks in college, and in home-buying through redlining practices. The lack of social and academic support for people of color and impoverished individuals enrolled in the Truman Commission's expanded system of community colleges practically guaranteed low performance and failure. Finally, the HEA's financial aid program, in the form of Pell Grants, was quickly outstripped by the rising cost of higher education. All three well-meaning laws were unprotected against exclusionary practices, and in the case of HEA, unable to withstand the shifting economics of college-going for post-traditional students. Vestiges of racist and discriminatory practices, while no longer in open view, are inevitably entangled in the policies and practices of today, perpetuated by attitudes, traditions and stereotypical views of communities plagued by systemic disinvestment.

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While these legislations touted higher education as the vehicle for social and economic mobility, they paradoxically created a double burden for Blacks, the poor and the marginalized: Whole communities are victimized by their inability to access programs that were meant to improve their lot. When they do attempt it, and fail in large numbers due to the lack of appropriate support, they are labeled talentless, meritless and of questionable character. The community colleges, created to serve these communities in need, are trapped in this double bind as well: We attempt the Herculean task of restoring equity to marginalized communities by becoming the social and education hubs. We do so in the face of systematic defunding, but bound by high expectations and a well-honed mobility narrative for our students. When we turn out low performance due to the lack of support, we are put in our place, stigmatized, and funding is withdrawn as a leverage to improve. Our students are damned if we don't, and we are damned if we do.

The states that fund community colleges and the agencies overseeing the enterprise are intensely aware of the disparities between the four-year system and the two-year institutions, both in funding and in student attainment. Instead of engaging the context of historical neglect and the disintegration of connected systems, however, many doubled down on the meritocracy narrative: we will pay for performance, but you do not deserve funding if we do not see improvement. This would work if there is indeed enough funding to reward and scale up effective practices, but the overall pie never got bigger. To advance, you have to eat someone else's share of the pie. The attempts to encourage

better "accountability" through concepts such as performance funding (PF) not only reinforced the failure narrative, but fostered artificial competition that institutions could not afford. The latest research suggests that while PF only showed modest effectiveness on retention, the unintended consequences are dire, including attempts to increase admission standards to improve success, creating once again prejudicial and systemic practices that leave marginalized and minoritized students in their wake.[5]

"The pandemic confirmed what educators attuned to our local communities have known for a long time; that equity or fairness are rare commodities in the marginalized communities we serve."

Surviving in a higher education system that clings to a narrow understanding of meritocracy; bound by a college mobility narrative that ill-fits our students; and fending off accountability measures that are narrow and financially punishing, it is hardly surprising that the community colleges have been misrepresented and systematically defunded over the last two decades. Without understanding the context of structural racism, and systemic marginalization, it would seem to policymakers that the community college segment of higher education, the segment that is most democratic and serving almost half of the undergrads in this country, is simply a losing investment, throwing good money after bad.

When the lightning of the pandemic struck, the disinvestment and the wealth gap we saw in our Black and Latinx communities shocked, but hardly surprised those of us who have been building social services into our institutions. The brightness of the COVID-19 lightning now made the picture much clearer, and the understanding of what is amiss in our students' communities became widespread. The connection of disinvestment to systemic racism has long been known. COVID-19 made us look, and the anti-racism protests of the summer ensured that our gaze remained steady to reassess the past and to recognize our nation's exclusionary impulse. We can go back 400 years to the beginning of Black slavery to draw a direct line from racial repression at our nation's beginning, through the practices of redlining and Jim Crow, to the contemporary social and economic policies and practices that feed discriminatory systems. Similarly, other marginalized communities of color, and of poverty, can find parallel paths in history. We can trace the motif of perpetual alienation and invisibility of Asian Americans, from the erasure of Chinese labor that built the Continental Railroad, to the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, and the internment of Japanese Americans in WWII. Even the dubious honor of being the "model minority" is predicated upon assimilation and silence. It is no accident that some still refer to COVID-19 as the "Chinese virus," or that my Asian students are afraid to go on the subway alone, for fear of being singled out and physically harassed. We also note the long struggle of immigration in our Latinx communities, the latest episodes playing out at the southern borders and in the DACA deliberations in the Supreme Court. The recent Muslim bans issued by the

"A student's ability to persist and succeed at community college is tied to their perception of belonging."

White House via executive order repeats, in exclusionary spirit if not exact deed, the immigration fears my ancestors felt in 1882.

While race and ethnicity are strong determinants of generational repression and deprivation, our systemic neglect razes marginalized communities of every kind. White families living on the lowest rungs of the socio-economic ladder, urban or rural, have not been spared. The increasing share of the social safety net being borne by philanthropy is a troubling indicator that our public policies and funding are not meeting needs. Food security policies, tied to SNAP and TANF, are always in jeopardy, with escalating work requirements for the poor, translating into threats to our independent students and our student parents. The pandemic showed that our hold on food security, and ultimately on public health, is tenuous. The Greater Boston Food Bank, which supplies our own college pantry, experienced the two largest distributions in its 40-year history in March and April, recording respectively 8.1 million and 9.5 million pounds.[6] Housing, transportation and childcare, along with food security, comprise the essential points of stability a student needs to meet in order to successfully pursue postsecondary education.

The pandemic confirmed what educators attuned to our local communities have known for a long time; that equity or fairness are rare commodities in the marginalized communities we serve; that our students are economically fragile despite their resilience. The narratives of educational meritocracy and social mobility promise transformation, yet work against them when support is absent. Pedagogical and curricular reform in the classrooms alone are not enough to help them stay when the pandemic comes.

A student's ability to persist and succeed at community college is tied to their perception of belonging. Without it, learners are cast in limbo, in exile, as we saw when we closed the physical campus in March. Fostering that sense of belonging requires us to build a complex web of assurance: of physical safety, of financial survival, of basic needs, of social connections, of cultural respect and of intellectual curiosity. The hub, the term I have used to envision the transformational structure that our nation's community colleges are becoming, might just be that place of promise. At the hub, we are already writing a new social contract with our students; at the hub, we could imagine and initiate a just and equitable recovery from these chaotic, COVID-19 days.

The Vision of a Just Recovery and the Community College Hub

Through the struggle and disengagement of our students, we learned how our systems of K-16 education, public health, housing, transportation and the environment are

interconnected and broken. While the pandemic has ripped gaping holes in our already weakened social fabric, it also revealed something else. It led us to see the unintended transformation of the community colleges during the last two decades of disinvestment.

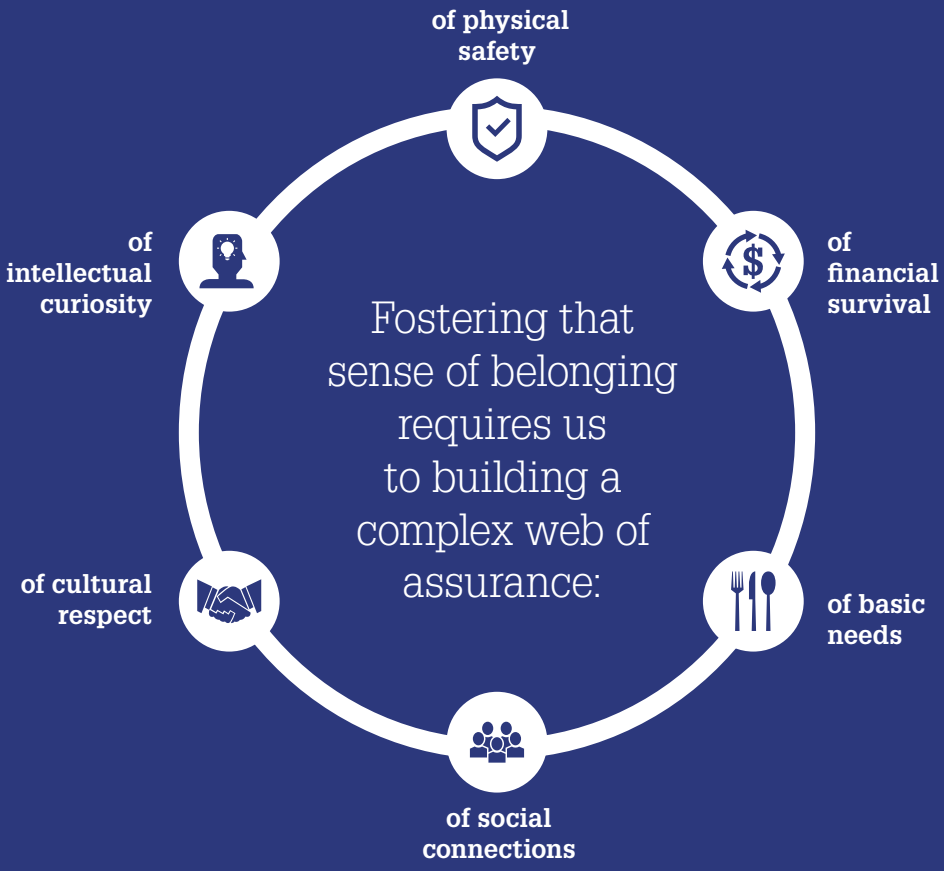
Despite the lack of resources, we have created necessary structures to serve those in need. The community college changed from a single, siloed institution of higher education, to an integrated social hub: we have found coherence in conjuring up a food pantry adjacent to classrooms and labs, an emergency office next to the gym, housing on campus for the homeless, childcare centers and more. We have become holistic, equity-minded institutions that promote community engagement, economic mobility, and ultimately, social equity.

"The reality-check of the pandemic, and our growing understanding about the historical and relentless marginalization of our communities, forced us to confront systemic failures."

While the colleges grapple with this role because of its enormity, there is every evidence that we are becoming a better iteration of ourselves at the beginning of this new century. In our gradual but growing understanding of higher education in the context of race, immigration and the systemic forces of discrimination, we have reflected and acted with a sense of moral purpose to fulfill a social contract, even in the absence of resources, and many times, in a punishing environment filled with stigma. We have come to understand our double bind, and have begun to refute the false narratives and to push back against unrealistic measures and expectations borne of an unequal meritocracy. We have not given up on student success or pedagogical reforms, but in building the food pantry and answering the call for basic needs and holistic support, we have left behind the nagging voices, telling us that social services are not in our job description.

As we listen closely to the field during this pandemic, against the backdrop of #BlackLivesMatter and the call for social equity and justice, we can hear a shift in the way we ask questions about persistence and success. Gayatri Spivak's idea that the research question reveals as much about the researcher as it does the subject of inquiry applies here.[7] Perhaps having spent two decades delving into student data and witnessing our learners' obstacle-filled journeys, our empathy has heightened and our views have matured. Our "gaze" is shifting, from focusing on the students' deficit to the readiness of the institution to see the students through an asset-based lens, and to provide appropriate support for students to reach their potential.

The reality-check of the pandemic, and our growing understanding about the historical and relentless marginalization of our communities, forced us to confront systemic failures. It turns the questions about persistence and success to us; how have our institutions been complicit? Instead of casting blame on the academic inadequacies of the learner, how should colleges ready themselves to support students in order to foster success?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Fostering that sense of belonging requires us to building a complex web of assurance:

The answers move us beyond academic solutions, to the systematic work we must do to center the students' experience at the institution. For learners to stay and succeed, they must get "love from the hub."[8] We endeavor to foster a sense of belonging, a sense of place. The following strategies might provide a beginning. They are intuitive, simple even, but their implementation will demand changes in our hearts and minds:

- **Know Your Students:** ATD's institutional change work on Holistic Student Support begins with this deceptively simple request.[9] We must know our students in the context of their lived experiences as well as their data file. Know their community and their histories and acknowledge their complexity.
- **Dismantle Negative Narratives:** We reframe the negative, stereotypical narratives of our students, whether it is based on race, ethnicity, economic and social status, or gender. [10] Only then can we affirm their place and worth in the academic space.
- **Identify Cultural Wealth:** Our solution to student success cannot lie in academic and curricular intervention alone. If so, we would have solved the issue a decade ago. Knowing our students requires that we honor the heritages and the cultural capital they bring with them, and help them apply these strengths in service to their learning.[11]
- **Recognize #RealCollege as Contemporary Higher Education:** We acknowledge the real risks experienced by undergraduates in physical, emotional and financial terms as higher education becomes increasingly out of reach. Reassess traditional assumptions about college as a rite of passage for young men and women, and recognize the impact of outdated policies and practices on today's undergraduates, the majority of whom are post-traditional working adults and student parents.
- **Know Who You are in Your Guidance:** As practitioners, we strive for a dual awareness of the experiences that shaped us as educators and the impact of that upon our students, who carry with them their own unique backgrounds and cultures. We check our own assumptions about our students, their origins and their experiences, and ensure that we have not inadvertently built biases into our human and electronic interactions.

Assembling the Hub and the Culture of Collaboration

History has shown that economic recoveries fail communities of color. Writing at the height of recovery from the Great Recession of 2008, the Federal Reserve Bank of Boston publication, The Color of Wealth in Boston, reported that the average net worth of Blacks in 2015 was $8, compared to whites at $247,500. Hispanic groups fared better by the thinnest margins, hovering under $3,000 for the most part. The recovery barely touched these communities. Those of us at community colleges shared a similar fate with our students. Even today, as late as 2020, Massachusetts Community Colleges have not recovered our pre-2008 funding level.

> "In becoming a hub of services for our communities, our colleges have been building this just and equitable recovery in microcosm."

This time around, however, the disproportionate damage caused by the pandemic to our communities of color, and the wide support given to the anti-racism protests, have fueled a demand for a more just and equitable recovery. The Brookings Institute, writing on this concept, envisions a three-frame "Rebuilding Better" effort that focuses on Black and Brown communities. It calls for business stimulus and quality jobs for a diverse workforce; infrastructure investments such as universal broadband in inclusive neighborhoods; and enhancing the capacity of institutions "with credibility in Black and Brown communities" to design economic recovery plans. At heart of the just recovery effort must be a multi-sector commitment toward a shared vision of social justice.[12]

It is perhaps in this new vision of recovery that we see the next iteration of our future. In becoming a hub of services for our communities, our colleges have been building this just and equitable recovery in microcosm. To help our learners navigate the arduous path towards social and economic mobility, we link multiple sectors; we activate public, private and philanthropic partnerships; we build a community with many identities with a sense of belonging for all.

As we expand our vision of the hub, we can imagine that, even as we are the hub to our own communities, we are also part of a larger collective, a larger ecosystem that connects states and regions; a broader healing ecology that begins to right the systemic neglect that has persisted for so long.

Preconditions for a Culture of Collaboration: Similar to the field's effort to develop a culture of evidence a decade earlier, growing a culture of collaboration is contingent upon an institution's habit of mind as well as its operational logistics. As public institutions, we often lack the business infrastructure and the academic flexibility to support deeply entwined partnerships. The traditional "comprehensive" identity of the community colleges defines us as independent entities that provide everything from non-credit training to full-credit degrees, and pledge the certainty of economic rise. Yet, we know this model has not reached its promise, either in providing the full range of experiences for learners or meeting workforce needs. Our future depends on partners. The work is too vast and too complex for colleges to go it alone.

The hub, in essence, must be an assemblage of old and new parts to better serve our students. We must be willing to deconstruct what we have and examine the parts anew, to invite in new components and to integrate unfamiliar and improved processes. The work of presidents, financial officers and faculty and staff leaders is to craft a better assemblage, and a compelling accompanying narrative about the unifying mission of the

hub. Dismantling well-entrenched structures is painstaking and requires many assurances that the cleared spaces will be replaced with hope and coherence. Anyone engaged in the work of transfer, or non-credit to credit conversion, or addressing the workforce skills gap, is well aware of the leadership challenges and the opportunities.

Deep partnerships with the community and industry sectors require changes in mindset for everyone on campus. To be open to sharing might mean negotiating control over traditionally academic grounds, from curriculum and programming to mundane considerations like space and hours of operations. Leadership dialogue that articulates a full vision of what the hub means to student success is critical to laying the groundwork for change. How we tell the story of a new hope (or hub) must be part of our leadership practices.

"At heart of the just recovery effort must be a multi-sector commitment toward a shared vision of social justice."

Opening the Doors: As we commit the college to new integrations, we must invite the community to join and bring every sector into the hub, from healthcare, to technology, to business and the innovation economy. Whether it is for an advisory board, curriculum and program development, cultural events, worker training, paid internships, faculty externships, equipment and knowledge-sharing, exhibition and retail space, incubation shops -- bring them in. Hub culture can only be reinforced by presence and vibrancy. We must broaden the concept of community beyond the familiar social services and community-based organization (CBOs) to public and private sectors of business and industry where our students will grow their careers, and our colleges will gain regional and national foundation thought partners. We continuously invite and convene, carrying the invitation everywhere through leadership dialogues and venues of civic engagement.

As we build the assemblage, we will witness the force of collective impact under the roof of the hub, where the intentions of the various parts come together to hold the students secure, and lead them to experiences and completion. The multiplicity of partners is often overwhelming, and one must find an institutional compass for guidance. Bunker Hill went to our College Value Statement to find that grounding, and examined each partnership through the lens of equity for our students. We turned down unpaid internships from prestigious companies even when we urgently needed partners, knowing that it would be a barrier for our low-income students. This value-driven philosophy, once known to employers, paid off. State Street Bank Boston converted their part-time hiring into paid internships, and put aside over 30 slots for our students.

Our values also led us to some unexpected partners that validated our students. A dozen of our students of color, all post-traditional, formed the first cohort of the Hack Diversity

program of the Boston Venture Capitalist Association. The Association determined that the tech sector's lack of diversity is not acceptable and theorized that placing interns of color and women in tech firms will help to debunk the myth that there is no diverse talent available. We are now in the third year of this partnership. All the interns have landed jobs, and other colleges are sending students into the program.

Hack Diversity was an unexpected connection, born of wide civic engagement in the field by senior staff, and an openness to explore possibilities for partnerships that addressed equity. We found similar partners in the cultural sector. Last year, all 10 of the internship slots at the Boston Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum hosted Bunker Hill students, a result of leadership conversations focusing on community engagement, equity and developing students of talent at community colleges.

In that same values-guided sense, we welcomed the Single Stop grant program a decade ago to provide emergency service and financial literacy training, and institutionalized the office at the end of the grant despite a tight budget. Our Single Stop office also provides recertification services for SNAP and advising on social service eligibility. We knew the insidiousness of hunger and want, and how they derail students. The presence of Single Stop also led to the building of a college pantry, which in turn, brought Bunker Hill into deeper partnership with the Greater Boston Food Bank. We also rely on our housing and transportation authorities, our four-year partners with dorms, local networks of emergency shelters and social services advocates as part of our resource team for students.

We have also opened our doors to CBOs, both local and national. They provide the depth and reach that sometimes the college cannot, and provide ways to boost student connections and affinities. Organizations such as the Advising Corp, EdVestors, uAspire, Single Stop, Bottomline, the Boston Private Industry Council and Year Up all added value to the student success experience beyond what institution-based services could provide. The deep knowledge and the technical innovations developed by these groups, and their student-centered approaches, make them good partners in the hub space. Many of you already share spaces with One-Stop Career Centers on your campuses to serve job seekers. These adjacencies are key to a powerful job network.

Bunker Hill's wide-open-door is a collective impact strategy, a civic leadership strategy, and ultimately a safety net and student success strategy. We documented more than 400 relationships at various levels with our community as part of the Carnegie Foundation's Classification for Community Engagement metric. In this swirl of activities within the hub, we continuously seek the right pieces to assemble solutions for our students.

Early Colleges as Hub Experiments: Early College (EC) in its most contemporary form is an exemplar of a collaborative strategy that erases the traditional boundary between secondary and college education, and dismantles the deficit narratives that surround

marginalized students and their potential in higher education. In Massachusetts, official EC designation from the commonwealth carries funding that enables K-16 collaborations to be built with an equity lens. Programs welcomed high school students from across the academic achievement spectrum rather than "skimming the top" for high achievers. These ECs embraced, as cornerstones, holistic support and career literacy as well as academic rigor. EC students mirrored the demographics of the community colleges; they came from communities of color, were majority low-income, and first in their family to attend college.

The early results are extraordinary. A 2020 fact sheet issued by the non-partisan think tank MassINC (Massachusetts Institute for a New Commonwealth) noted that EC students are 20 percentage points (pp) more likely than their non-EC peers to enroll in college without interruption after their EC experience (56% vs 76%); Black EC students are 38 pp more likely (51% vs 89%), and Latinx students are 24 pp ahead in college entry (48% vs 72%). EC students apply at higher rates for federal financial aid (FAFSA), and tackle more rigorous coursework.

The collective impact of multiple partnerships made the EC experiment possible in Massachusetts. In addition to the modest initial state budget investment, the Smith Family Foundation's multi-million dollar, multi-year investment scaled and sustained the ECs through the pilot years. Core academics, field experiences supplied by local industries and technical assistance provided by area nonprofits, such as Jobs for the Future and the Boston Private Industry Council, were all part of the assemblage that came together under the community college hub.

There are a dozen ECs now in Massachusetts, most sheltered under community college operations, if not their actual physical plant, as a part of the hub. The EC experiment is not unique to Massachusetts or new to the field, but in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, it presents new insights and potential as we look to just and equitable reforms in K-16 education.

Embedding Industry Spaces and Expertise: Symbiotic relationships with industry provide some of the best examples of the hub assembly. The automotive industry has done this for decades. Toyota T-TEN (Toyota Technician Training and Education Network), General Motors ASEP (Automotive Service Education Program) and Chrysler MOPAR CAP (Career Automotive Program) are examples of industry-specific technician training programs housed in college facilitates, using industry donated curriculum and equipment, industry-certified faculty and local dealer internship locations to deliver a complete educational experience to students. Post-graduate employment is rarely a question.

Many community colleges develop similar operational relationships with other industries, from allied health, to business, to education. Clinics operated by colleges and staffed by students run the gamut, from dental, physical and massage therapy, and personal

> "Early College (EC) in its most contemporary form is an exemplar of a collaborative strategy that erases the traditional boundary between secondary and college education, and dismantles the deficit narratives that surround marginalized students and their potential in higher education."

training. Businesses such as childcare centers, retail, student bank branches and other entrepreneurial operations are similarly connected to academic activities. These non-traditional operations add to a dynamic social and educational hub that offers different dimensions of engagement for learners, and an academic identity beyond the traditional.

Corporate Philanthropy and the Formation of New Collectives: The sweeping investments recently announced by large corporate foundations to uplift communities and regions are excellent opportunities to expand the community college hubs.

JPMorgan Chase's (JPMC) New Skills at Work initiative invests $7 million each in five U.S. cities – Boston, Columbus, Dallas, Indianapolis and Nashville – as part of the firm's $75 million global commitment to address career readiness and the future of work. These five-year philanthropic investments make up a portion of the $30 billion commitment to advance racial equity and drive an inclusive economic recovery.

Bringing together CBOs, K-16s, industry, municipal and state workforce systems, the JPMC investment allows each city to create a hub and a sheltering space to develop talent, particularly in low-income communities and communities of color. In each case, the community college serves as the chief architect of the skill-building pathway, as well as a steward of the learner-centered, culturally just and equitable educational ecosystem that is key to success for marginalized students everywhere.

JPMC Chairman and CEO Jamie Dimon noted in an October 2020 webinar that this is an issue that existed way before COVID-19. He further noted in a public announcement that, "Too many young people – especially in Black and Latinx communities – are left behind without the education, skills and experience needed to get good jobs…. At this critical time – as we all work to address systemic racism and inequities – it's necessary for business, government and communities to come together and help young people have equitable access to economic opportunity." The formation of a multi-faceted alliance, as much as the financial investment itself, is the part of the solution.

One such alliance is the New York Jobs CEO Council. Established in August 2020, the coalition of 27 CEOs from the largest employers in the New York area, including

JPMC, Amazon and Google, will collaborate with educational institutions, community organizations and nonprofits to hire 100,000 skilled workers by 2030 from traditionally underserved, low-income, Black, Latinx and Asian communities. Job opportunities and apprenticeships for 25,000 CUNY students is part of this ambitious plan.

Similar concerns about equity in opportunity have driven investments by Bank of America, which is implementing a $40 million, three-year commitment to connect 100,000 young people from diverse communities to employment experiences to achieve long-term success. Nonprofits, mayors, K-12 and community colleges are again essential partners; internships, education, skills training and appropriate student support are the tools for equity.

Between the months of June and October 2020, Pfizer, Salesforce, and the Business Roundtable, an association of some 200 CEOs, made commitments of jobs, resources and strategic directions that would advance equity in health, education, finance, employment, housing and the justice system.

Again and again, we see widening recognition of social and economic inequities in the business and industry sectors, and the growing realization that the solutions must come from a collective, and not any one system alone. This emerging understanding and the rising support provide hope for those of us working in community colleges, whose journey in the past few decades has been lonely, impoverished and arduous. It is critical, however, to remember the equity lessons of the GI Bill and the Truman Commission community college expansion as we seek solutions with multiple partners. Unless we are deliberate about dismantling barriers and false narratives, we risk inviting, yet ultimately leaving behind, the same marginalized communities and perpetuating the gaps we see today.

In crafting the vision that animates a just recovery, whether in the macro context of the cities, the heartland and the nation, or in the microcosm of the Bunker Hill Community College hub, we take care to learn from ideas of the past. This contemporary vision

"Difficult as it is to witness the misery and urgent need, I believe we will seize this moment of clarity to think anew about our role as colleges in our community, and how we can be agents of change in the coming decade."

resists the desire to impose. It is generative, and seeks to individualize, to democratize and to place the students and their community at the heart of the effort. In the case of Bunker Hill, the recovery effort requires that all the partners under the hub know the students, and co-design the pathways to success with them. The path is no less arduous but, within this vision, the perspective shifts and agency is returned to its rightful place, to the community we serve and to the learner.

The crack of lightning that was COVID-19 lit up the inhumane conditions in our communities and brought to a crisis point the systemic failures long fed by racism and marginalization of the poor. Difficult as it is to witness the misery and urgent need, I believe we will seize this moment of clarity to think anew about our role as colleges in our community, and how we can be agents of change in the coming decade. I hope you will explore the changing future of the hub with me and see it as a place of convergence, a place of revolution and the home of a new social promise with our students, to honor their histories, to activate their potential and claim their place in the world.

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About the Belk Center for Community College Leadership and Research

With a $10.86 million grant from the John M. Belk Endowment, the NC State College of Education will establish the Belk Center for Community College Leadership and Research to enhance and strengthen its support of community colleges in North Carolina in three ways:

- **Provide ongoing leadership development to community college executives.** The Presidents' Academy—a partnership between the Belk Center and the North Carolina Association of Community College Presidents—provides ongoing support to community college presidents in order to help them strengthen their institution's performance with student success outcomes.
- **Build capacity for evidence-based decision-making and applied research.** By conducting and disseminating action research, the Belk Center supports community college leaders in making evidenced-based decisions for enhanced institutional performance.
- **Further the preparation of future community college presidents.** The Community College Leadership doctoral program integrates executive leaders as professors of the practice into the redesigned curriculum. These professors of practice provide first-hand insights and experiences, field-based leadership opportunities, and examples of how theory and research inform practice. The Belk Center provides additional support to the Community College Leadership Doctoral Program including executive mentors, scholarships, data and writing coaches, and professional development opportunities.

Belk Center highlights from 2020 include the following:

- Served more than 500 individuals through Zoom sessions, webinars and instructional videos created to provide support when community colleges shifted to online learning at the onset of the coronavirus pandemic.
- Hosted the Presidents' Academy in March, attended by 40 N.C. community college leaders and their teams, and developed five Critical Conversations webinars for the Presidents' Academy to address issues related to the pandemic.

58 of 58
community colleges received support from the Belk Center

470
Times the Belk Center engaged with community colleges in N.C.

40
Community colleges represented through Presidents' Academy offerings

Belk Center Leadership Team

- **Audrey J. Jaeger, Ph.D.,** Executive Director and W. Dallas Herring Professor
- **James Bartlett, Ph.D.,** Director of Academic Programs and Associate Professor
- **Robert Templin, Ed.D.,** Professor of Practice and Senior Fellow with The Aspen Institute
- **Mary Rittling, Ed.D.,** Professor of Practice and Senior Fellow with The Aspen Institute
- **Ken Ender, Ph.D.,** Professor of Practice
- **Andrea DeSantis, M.A.,** Assistant Director of Research
- **Jemilia S. Davis, Ph.D.,** Director of Strategic Initiatives and External Relations
- **Kim Sepich, Ed.D.,** Director of Executive Leadership Programs

About the Belk Center Advisory Board

The Belk Center for Community College Leadership and Research National Advisory Board consists of current and former community college presidents, leaders from organizations whose work supports community colleges, and community college system leaders. The expertise of the National Advisory Board is helping to direct the Belk Center in preparing the next generation of community college leaders and addressing the most pressing issues facing North Carolina community colleges. The National Advisory Board monitors the Belk Center's progress. The 2020-2021 National Advisory members are listed below:

- **David Armstrong,** President Emeritus, Broward College
- **MC Belk**, Chair, John M. Belk Endowment (NC)
- **Thomas Brock,** Director, Community College Research Center/Teachers College/Columbia University (NY)
- **Bill Carver,** Interim President, North Carolina Community College System
- **Lisa Chapman,** President, Central Carolina Community College
- **Jeff Cox,** President, Wilkes County Community College
- **MaryAnn Danowitz,** Dean, NC State College of Education
- **Kandi Detimeyer,** President, Central Piedmont Commuity College (NC)
- **John Enamait,** President, Stanly County Community College (NC)
- **Rufus Glasper,** President, League for Innovation in the Community Colleges (AZ)
- **David Gomez,** President, Hostos Community College
- **Peter Hans,** President, University of North Carolina System
- **Garrett Hinshaw,** President, Catawba Valley (NC)
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- **Millicent Valek,** President, Brazoport College (TX)
- **Thomas Walker,** President, Wayne Community College (NC)
- **Gregory Williams,** President, Odessa College (TX)
- **Julie Woodson,** President, North Carolina Association of Community College Trustees (NC)
- **Josh Wyner,** Vice President, Aspen Institute (DC)

About Dallas Herring

Born in 1916 in Rose Hill, North Carolina, 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. W. Dallas Herring began his career in public service in 1939, when, at the age of 23, he became the mayor of his hometown, making him the youngest mayor in the country at the time. Beginning in 1955, Herring served on the North Carolina State Board of Education for almost 25 years. For 20 of those years he served as chairman of the board. During his tenure on the State Board of Education, W. Dallas Herring oversaw the development of a statewide system of technical education institutes that eventually became the North Carolina Community College System. Throughout his career, W. Dallas Herring was always guided by his vision of educational "opportunity for all the people."

How to Support Our Work with Community Colleges

You can help advance our efforts to support community colleges with a gift to the Belk Center and/or the W. Dallas Herring Professorship Endowment.

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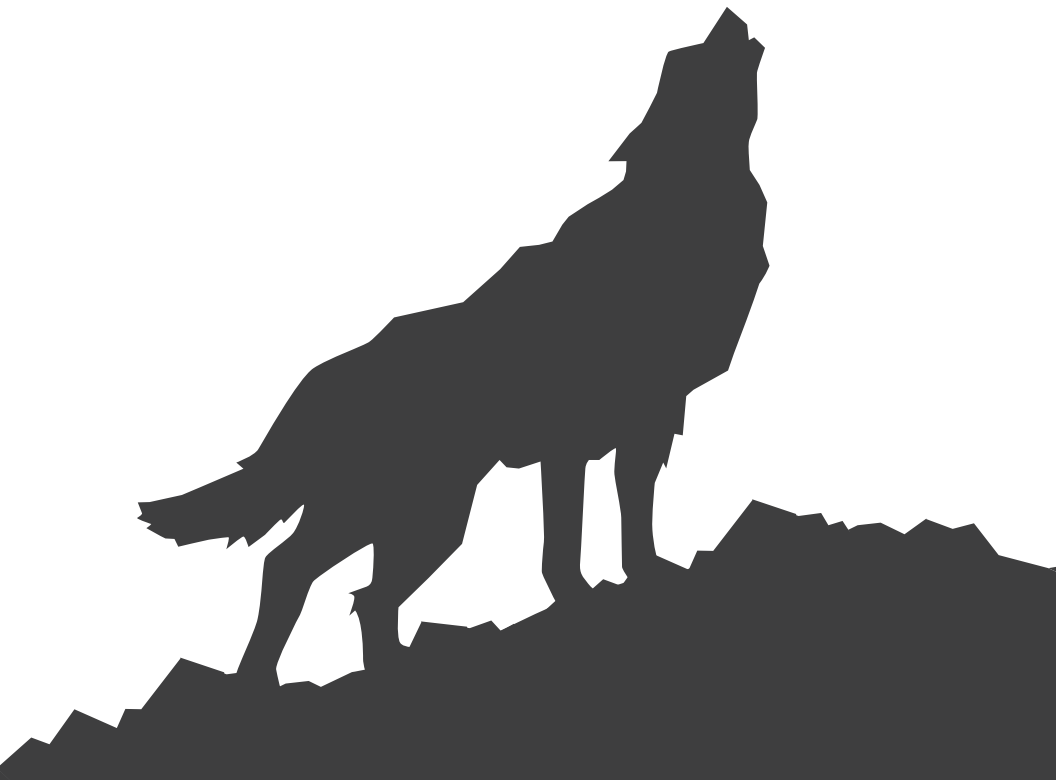
College of Education



As a research powerhouse

grounded in its land-grant mission, the NC State College of Education leads the way in solving pressing educational problems and in preparing professionals who transform the practice of teaching, learning and leading.

Top 5%
in Active Research Grants Among All Colleges of Education in U.S.

Top
Producer of Community College Leaders in North Carolina

#31
Ranked Graduate College of Education in the U.S.

Sources: *U.S. News* and Academic Analytics

NC STATE
College of Education
Belk Center for Community College
Leadership and Research

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