

## **DARING TO BE EXTRAORDINARY: TRANSFORMING THE STRUCTURE OF HOW WE WORK**

**DR. FALECIA D. WILLIAMS, PRESIDENT, PRINCE GEORGE'S COMMUNITY COLLEGE**



*“My journey crystallized the belief instilled by my mother and grandmother that a good education — a higher education — opens doors to better opportunities. This realization led me to the postsecondary education sector fueling the vision of providing everyone with an authentic opportunity to ‘Dare to be Extraordinary.’”*

Dr. Falecia D. Williams' lecture spoke to the reality community colleges faced emerging from the pandemic era. She pointed to the myriad of challenges facing the postsecondary sector in the early 2020s — and provocatively asked whether the pandemic would ultimately be seen as a catastrophe or a catalyst for change that could transform colleges' ability to serve all of their students well.

Much of her work was grounded in her own lived experience, which she described: *“Growing up in the old citrus belt of Florida, where college was not the norm for Black individuals, I faced material poverty but was extremely rich in spirit and culture. I was raised by a blind mother and equally amazing grandmother whose strong work ethic and selflessness influenced me profoundly.”*

Dr. Williams declared that community colleges must respond to the emerging challenges

to their model and work with *“thoughtful, strategic and innovative frameworks, models and operational practices that position us for remarkable change and progress.”*

Prince George's Community College had embraced this need in its strategic plan, *“Dare to be Extraordinary.”*

The plan focused on enhancing equitable access, optimizing student success pathways, creating optimal learning conditions and fostering workforce innovation through comprehensive campus models, targeted support services and strategic partnerships.

Dr. Williams recommended several questions to kickstart a similar process for other colleges: First, *“What worked? What didn't work?”* and second, *“What do we need to renew? What do we need to let go of?”*

**THE CHALLENGE BEFORE US:**  
**WHAT WOULD IT MEAN TO  
TRULY BE EXTRAORDINARY?**



## **COMMUNITY COLLEGES IN ACTION: ADVANCING EQUITY AND ENHANCING ECONOMIC MOBILITY USING LOCAL COLLECTIVE IMPACT STRATEGIES**

**DR. MIKE FLORES, CHANCELLOR, ALAMO COLLEGES DISTRICT**



*“All colleges, especially community colleges, play a critical role in providing a pathway for students to increase their economic and social mobility by providing both the technical and essential skills they need for the jobs of today and tomorrow. That is why creating credentials of value is critical if we are to show not only the value of higher education, but improve our state and national economy.”*

Dr. Mike Flores, Chancellor of the Alamo Colleges District, delivered the Dallas Herring Lecture in 2022. His remarks zeroed in on the need of community colleges to both address and bolster economic mobility through localized collective impact strategies.

One key recommendation from Dr. Flores was the need to deepen your understanding of all of the communities you serve.

*“These are students at Alamo Colleges who look like me, they look like my daughters — they are students who in many cases are the first ones to go to college and earn a degree. It is critical that we prioritize our funds for those who are under-resourced or don’t see themselves on our campuses, or don’t feel that they have a voice.”*

Dr. Flores also highlighted the power of collective impact strategies, emphasizing how community colleges can partner with local government, businesses and nonprofit organizations to create comprehensive support systems for students and address broader community challenges. The AlamoPROMISE program exemplifies this approach, bringing together diverse stakeholders to provide tuition-free college education and wraparound services to eligible students.

*“AlamoPROMISE is our collective community moonshot to end cycles of generational poverty in the greater San Antonio region.”*

**THE CHALLENGE BEFORE US:**

## **HOW DO WE BUILD OUR OWN COLLECTIVE APPROACH TO SERVE ALL STUDENT NEEDS?**



## **REDEFINING ACCESS: *THE POWER OF PROXIMITY***

**GREGORY A. HAILE, PRESIDENT, BROWARD COLLEGE**



*“As a postsecondary institution, I think it’s our job not just to be proud of the accolades...but to be conscious of ‘Who are we missing? Who wants a better life but can’t figure out how to get there?’”*

Former Broward College President Gregory Haile’s Dallas Herring Lecture, titled *Redefining Access: The Power of Proximity*, called for reimagining higher education access through a collaborative, replicable and disruptive model. Haile emphasized that community colleges were designed to magnify access, particularly for the most challenged among us.

Haile asked attendees to consider the implications of education attainment on a trio of troubles — economic disruption, racial reckoning and the pandemic.

When considering proximity, Haile pinpointed three different challenges: physical geography (whether students can easily travel to a college); social proximity (whether students feel they belong at a college); and financial

proximity, which extends beyond tuition to all basic needs students might have, including housing and childcare.

Haile shared his own powerful story to illustrate the impact of limited proximity to higher education: “I was that sixth grader in elementary school in 1989 who was hearing about college for the first time. My high school teacher told me that if I made it to college, I would never survive. I was in the top 15% of my high school class with a 2.7 GPA, and not a single community college ever reached out to me.” This personal experience underscores the importance of proximity in educational access. Haile later introduced Broward College’s Broward UP initiative as a model for addressing proximity challenges, bringing college to underserved communities.

**THE CHALLENGE BEFORE US:  
FOCUS NOT ONLY ON WHO WE ARE SERVING BUT ALSO  
ON WHO WE ARE MISSING, AND WORK TO PROVIDE  
COLLABORATIVE URGENCY AMONG EDUCATION LEADERS  
AND COMMUNITY PARTNERS TO ADDRESS THESE ISSUES.**



## **INSIGHTS FROM THE PANDEMIC: *THE RECKONING & THE HOPE AT OUR NATION'S COMMUNITY COLLEGES***

**DR. PAM EDDINGER, PRESIDENT, BUNKER HILL COMMUNITY COLLEGE**



*“But here’s the light amidst the darkness. As much as the pandemic revealed the failure of social and economic systems, it has also shown us a radical transformation in the nature of community colleges.”*

Dr. Pam Eddinger, President of Bunker Hill Community College, delivered the 2020 Dallas Herring Lecture roughly six months into the COVID-19 pandemic. Dr. Eddinger focused on the myriad of ways in which community colleges emerged to serve as hubs for their community in a moment of need, including providing laptops and WiFi, food pantries, mental health counseling and even housing.

Dr. Eddinger highlighted the historical context of systemic racism and disinvestment in marginalized communities, which the pandemic

brought into stark relief. She went on to note that a pandemic recovery would occur, but that it was vital for both society and community colleges that the recovery be just and equitable.

*“I believe the crack of lightning that was COVID really did light up the inhumane conditions in our communities. And difficult as it is to witness the misery, I think 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 decades.”*

**THE CHALLENGE BEFORE US:**  
***A NEW ‘SOCIAL CONTRACT’ IS  
NEEDED BETWEEN COMMUNITY  
COLLEGES AND THEIR COMMUNITIES.***



## ECOSYSTEM THINKING IN HIGHER EDUCATION: ***THE FUTURE OF TRANSFER***

DR. SANFORD "SANDY" SHUGART, PRESIDENT, VALENCIA COLLEGE



*“Here is the reason to redesign the transfer ecosystem: Within the existing model are the students who have chosen a more affordable pathway, one that reduces the need for debt, and one that can provide the education and credential they require for economic and social mobility, but relatively few will achieve this goal in the system as designed.”*

Valencia College President Dr. Sandy Shugart called on community colleges to redesign the system for transferring to four-year colleges. He began by noting that the scale and importance of transfer has grown in step with the expansion of community colleges' role in the higher education system.

He pointed out, however, that the higher education system has failed to deliver the social and economic opportunity and mobility it has long promised—especially to lower-income students and to people of color. He suggested that dramatic improvements in the structure of the transfer ecosystem are not only necessary, but may be the only way to meet these challenges.

Dr. Shugart proposed six design principles to make transfer ecosystems more effective:

Taking students' entire pathway through community college and four-year institutions into account, emphasizing the value proposition of transferring for students, enhancing policies for retaining and applying credit for four-year degrees, emphasizing the value of the associate's degree prior to transfer, identifying and addressing financial barriers to transfer success, and understanding that transfer is a career pathway.

As an example of a successful transfer program, Dr. Shugart pointed to the *Direct Connect to UCF* program, which guarantees admission to the University of Central Florida to any associate's degree graduate of participating local community colleges. More than 50,000 students have earned bachelor's degrees from UCF after transferring from community colleges since the program began in 2005.

THE CHALLENGE BEFORE US:  
***REDESIGNING THE TRANSFER ECOSYSTEM  
TO DELIVER ON COMMUNITY COLLEGES'  
PROMISE OF OPPORTUNITY AND MOBILITY.***



## **THE URGENT CASE: CENTERING TEACHING AND LEARNING IN THE NEXT GENERATION OF COMMUNITY COLLEGE REDESIGN**

**DR. KAREN STOUT, PRESIDENT AND CEO, ACHIEVING THE DREAM**



*"If we are to put students at the center, excellent teaching and support for quality instruction must be at the core of our reform work."*

Dr. Karen Stout, Achieving the Dream President and CEO, called for focusing community college redesign efforts on prioritizing teaching and learning in the 2018 Dallas Herring Lecture. She acknowledged that reform efforts have kept these issues in mind but noted that teaching and learning are still not central enough to the field's theory of change, adding that "creating greater urgency" for teaching and learning among reform efforts is "long overdue."

To support community college leaders in developing a culture of teaching and learning excellence, Dr. Stout proposed three key organizing principles and five building blocks.

The organizing principles: Inclusive and evidence-based instructional practices to foster student learning; students engaged as active learners in an accessible, empowering,

personalized and supportive academic climate; and an organizational culture built around continuous improvement.

The five building blocks: Adoption of continuous improvement models to drive curriculum and pedagogy innovation; creation of campus innovation hubs to drive teaching improvements; support for faculty to approach teaching with an understanding of their students' diverse experiences, skills and knowledge; development of and investment in adjunct faculty engagement; and prioritizing teaching and learning in the design of truly student-centered institutions.

Dr. Stout concluded by pointing out that emphasizing teaching and learning may look like an "old approach," but it is in fact a "bold action" that can drive the success of reform efforts.

## **THE CHALLENGE BEFORE US: RETURNING TEACHING AND LEARNING TO THE CENTER OF EFFORTS TO ENHANCE COMMUNITY COLLEGE STUDENT SUCCESS.**



## **GROWING INEQUALITY AND DECLINING ECONOMIC MOBILITY, THE TWIN CHALLENGES OF OUR TIME: *WHAT LEADERS OF HIGHER EDUCATION CAN DO***

**DR. EDUARDO PADRÓN, PRESIDENT, MIAMI DADE COLLEGE**



*"We need to embrace the understanding that talent is universal, but right now, opportunity is not. We need to change that equation."*

Dr. Eduardo Padrón, President of Miami Dade College, addressed the challenge of growing inequality and decreasing economic mobility in higher education in the 2017 Dallas Herring Lecture.

Dr. Padrón began by mapping the changes in society and higher education from the middle of the twentieth century to the present moment. He pointed out that this period spans from the introduction of the G.I. Bill, which dramatically expanded higher education access, to today, when studies have shown significantly greater government spending on predominantly white public higher education institutions compared with majority Black institutions.

To combat increasing inequality and decreasing social mobility in higher education, Dr. Padrón offered five suggestions for higher education leaders: Reclaiming the meaning of prestige, reclaiming vocational education, linking higher education with entrepreneurial energy, continuing to make the case for college learning, and building comprehensive support systems for students.

Dr. Padrón concluded his speech by calling on college educators to recognize their duty *"to the people struggling to find their place in a changing world,"* adding, *"we need to fulfill our obligation to work with a new generation of students."*

**THE CHALLENGE BEFORE US:  
*ADDRESSING ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL  
INEQUALITY TO SUPPORT A DIVERSE GENERATION  
OF COMMUNITY COLLEGE LEARNERS.***



## **COMMUNITY COLLEGE 3.0: WHAT'S NEXT FOR THE STUDENT SUCCESS AGENDA?**

**JOSH WYNER, VICE PRESIDENT AND EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR,  
COLLEGE EXCELLENCE PROGRAM AT THE ASPEN INSTITUTE**



*“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.”*

In his 2016 Dallas Herring Lecture, Josh Wyner, Vice President and Executive Director of the College Excellence Program at the Aspen Institute, called for what he termed *Community College 3.0*—an emphasis on success after graduation.

Building on Community College 1.0, which prioritized access, and Community College 2.0, which focused on completion, Wyner said colleges in the 3.0 model must build structures to focus their missions and practices on students' post-graduation outcomes. Doing so will enable community colleges to better connect students to their primary goal of having a better life than they could have had without college, align community colleges more closely with universities and employers, and streamline community college education via clear and efficient pathways to degrees and other credentials.

Wyner detailed some of the benefits of a focus on outcomes, including accelerating program choice, increasing the chance that each program actually helps students, clarifying the degrees that require subsequent higher education, and increasing the likelihood of achieving equitable results.

He offered five strategies for institutions to succeed in Community College 3.0: Redefining student success to include post-graduation outcomes; enhancing collaboration with four-year colleges and universities on topics such as course sequences and extracurricular activities; engaging employers in defining talent development goals; aligning advising systems with post-graduation objectives; and reorienting leadership around the goal of success after graduation.

**THE CHALLENGE BEFORE US:  
BUILDING STRUCTURES TO HELP COMMUNITY  
COLLEGE STUDENTS SUCCEED IN THE WORKFORCE  
OR FOUR-YEAR INSTITUTIONS AFTER GRADUATION.**



## ***LEADERSHIP FOR THE 21ST CENTURY COMMUNITY COLLEGE***

**DR. KEN ENDER, PRESIDENT, HARPER COLLEGE**



*“Community college leaders’ biggest mistake, for our sector and our country, would be to believe that the institutions of today will be sufficient for the challenges of tomorrow.”*

In 2015’s inaugural Dallas Herring Lecture, Dr. Ken Ender, then the President of Harper College, spoke about how the changing environment for community colleges requires a new set of skills for the leaders of these institutions.

He painted a picture of what he called four eras of community college leadership: An early stage when the role required seeking funding from politicians and designing institutions modeled on colleges and universities; a period of rapid growth that necessitated building infrastructures and managing staffing issues; a time marked by adoption of new technologies and the need to integrate them into campuses; and the current era, where technology is changing even more rapidly and funding is scarce.

Dr. Ender detailed the knowledge and skills that 21st-century community colleges must possess to help their institutions thrive: Strong management skills; the ability to deal with ambiguity; expertise leading and managing organizational change strategies; imagination; an understanding of system design; comfort with taking risks; a talent for people-picking; and a deep commitment to access, assessment and achievement for all.

He concluded, *“If we do our jobs well, we can be part of the leadership of this country that assures 21st-century America remains a place where dreams can come true for everyone.”*

**THE CHALLENGE BEFORE US:  
*DEVELOPING LEADERS WHOSE SKILLS AND  
TALENTS MATCH THE NEEDS OF THE MOMENT.***