

How Community Colleges Maintain Sustainable Enrollment Growth through Collaborations with Outside Entities

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In the spirit of collaboration, The SOURCE on Community College Issues, Trends & Strategies and staff members of the National American University Roueche Graduate Center's Doctor of Education in Community College Leadership Program interviewed 18 community college professionals and scanned some of the latest research to present a general overview of successful collaborations that are helping to keep community colleges afloat and successful.

Community college budgets are supported by three primary financial resources: tuition, state appropriations, and local funding initiatives. All three are vastly different across the nation. The reliance on tuition revenue as a primary source of sustainability and growth cannot be overstated.

Unfortunately, enrollments are currently declining, and implementing solutions to reverse this trend is difficult and challenging. The barriers to increased enrollment and increased revenues are significant and numerous.

In this monograph, we present ten institutions that are doing things of a collaborative nature with outside entities, such as other institutions, high schools, corporations, and organizations, to help boost enrollment figures.

Beginning with **Austin Community College (ACC) in Texas**, we talked with three different departments to get a feel for how this growing college is collaborating with outside entities to enable enrollment growth, starting with its ACCelerator Lab that was established through a partnership with a real estate investment and development company to buy up space in a closed-up shopping mall and convert it into a sophisticated and modern learning lab for students. Another collaborative effort highlights how ACC has established important relationships with outside companies through its establishment of industry advisory committees, as well as its outreach to human resource professionals. The third part of ACC's extraordinary success comes from its continuing education department that does a great amount of workforce

training that often ends up as more modern curricula for many of its important degree and certificate programs.

At **Cuyahoga Community College (Tri-C) in Ohio**, the practice of collaborating with outside entities is fully identifiable and personified in its Corporate College. Founded in 2003, Tri-C's Corporate College was the brainchild of President Emerita Jerry Sue Thornton. Corporate College programs have a continuing professional development orientation in partnership with the local business community, along with a large portion of incumbent worker training programs (hourly workers in particular). Students come to Corporate College in a variety of ways, mostly sponsored by their employers.

A model of teamwork between multiple outside entities to bring about dynamic change can be found at **Wichita Area Technical College (WATC) in Kansas**, where a collaboration between government, private industry, and education resulted in building a \$54 million National Center for Aviation Training (NCAT) that opened in 2010.

Northern Virginia Community College (NOVA) in Virginia and the Community College of Baltimore County (CCBC) in Maryland are two institutions leading the way in the burgeoning field of cybersecurity programs, among many across the U.S. NOVA's Cybersecurity Center and CCBC's Institute for Cybersecurity collaborate with the National CyberWatch Center, the largest of five National Science Foundation (NSF) Advanced Technological Education (ATE) security technology

consortia, and an important source for a wide variety of services and information that help community colleges offering cybersecurity programs remain current.

Houston Community College (HCC) in Texas is one of many institutions across the country building its infrastructure to accommodate dual credit and early college high school programs. It currently serves six school districts in its area. HCC's early college high school programs have recently been revamped and centralized, and the college is seeing a huge boost in dual enrollments, up about 44% in 2016 over 2015.

At **Greenville Technical College (GTC) in South Carolina**, the Center for Manufacturing Innovation (CMI) is another outstanding model of collaboration between a variety of entities, including partnerships with four-year institutions and big business, with this particular example specifically attentive to the manufacturing arena. Through a collaboration with Clemson University and numerous industry partners, such as GE, Bosch, Michelin, and BMW, GTC recently opened a brand new, high-tech, 100,000 square foot manufacturing-specific building.

From 2008 through 2012 when the entire country was reeling from the Great Recession, **Chattanooga State Community College (CS) in Tennessee** pushed its Engineering & Information Technologies Department to forge ahead with establishing partnerships with two German companies that resulted in the construction of two outstanding facilities, the Volkswagen Academy and the Wacker Institute. Both are state-of-the-art manufacturing training facilities that combine hands-on experience with Chattanooga State's top-notch associate degree programs in Engineering Systems Technology, Mechatronics Systems Concentration (at the Academy), and a Chemical Engineering Technology program, along with two special Mechatronic degree programs (at the Institute).

In the early to mid-2000s, the President of **Northeast Wisconsin Technical College (NWTC) in Wisconsin**, H. Jeffrey Rafn, began to engage in a collaborative process with local hospitals to come up with a unique solution that would enable them to provide badly needed healthcare services to the rural, mostly poverty-level population north of Brown County. That process led to the grand opening of the N.E.W. Health and Dental Clinic in 2006, located on the NWTC campus, funded by a U.S. Department of Health and Human Services grant. In 2012, the grant was expanded a second time. In addition, financial support to sustain daily operations at the N.E.W. Clinic was provided by three local hospitals: Belin Hospital, St. Mary's Hospital, and St. Vincent Hospital.

Guilford Technical Community College (GTCC) in North Carolina took a unique approach in creating meaningful programs when President Emeritus Donald Cameron put the wheels in motion for one of his long-time personal dreams to create a one-of-a-kind Entertainment Technology AAS program for country music professionals. Cameron got the wheels in motion for the creation of this popular program back in 1998 when he met Larry Gatlin at a local event and asked him if he'd be interested in helping out. One year after that meeting, Cameron and Gatlin put together a team of music and entertainment industry experts to get the program off the ground.

The ten community colleges highlighted in this monograph reveal a relatively small sample of highly promising collaborative efforts between higher education institutions and outside entities that help increase enrollments and sustain revenues. There are many more. In the section of the monograph titled "Trends and Issues," we addressed some of the things happening today that can influence enrollment numbers, persistence, student success, and increased sources of revenue.

INTRODUCTION

A common theme shared by community college programs of all shapes and sizes across the nation concentrates on collaborations with outside entities, such as other academic institutions (high school, two-year, and four-year); with companies for workforce development, internships and apprenticeships; and with local, state, and national non-profit organizations and initiatives.

Broad societal economic needs are typically thrust upon community colleges to do more than their infrastructures allow or can afford. In short, community colleges have always been increasingly tasked with strengthening their political, economic, and social bases to survive the economic realities that are currently bringing on declining enrollments. However, adequate funding to pursue such interests is often lacking.

Community college budgets are supported by three primary financial resources: tuition, state appropriations, and local funding initiatives. All three are vastly different across the nation. However, “virtually all community colleges have become increasingly reliant on tuition as the primary revenue source. In the 10 years ending in 2012-13, the percentage of education and related expenditures covered by net tuition revenue rose from 26 to 39 percent, reflecting the broader state government disinvestment in higher education,” according to the Urban Institute.¹

The obvious conclusion is that boosting tuition revenues, through the reduction of drop-outs and the coinciding enhancement of completion rates, brings overall improvements at all levels of community college survival and infrastructure building. Enrollments are currently declining, and implementing solutions to reverse this trend is difficult and challenging to implement, but not impossible.

In short, the barriers to increased enrollment and hence increased revenues are significant, numerous, and challenging. What are these barriers and challenges?

They include, to begin with and perhaps most importantly in the grand scheme of college education, financial barriers that often depend on where a student lives. Highly different tuition/financing structures exist across the nation, creating large discrepancies in community college tuition costs. For example, the average annual tuition and fees costs nationally for full-time community college students in 2015-16 was \$3,430. In California, where 21% of all community college students reside, full-time enrollments are charged much less, at \$1,420, funded through state-sponsored fee waivers to low-income students. But, as noted by the Urban Institute, cost of living expenses in the state are much higher than most anywhere else in the country, “placing a different but no less challenging financing burden on students.”

At the other end of the tuition spectrum, the Community College of Vermont had published an annual price of \$7,530 for 2015-16. In that state only 21 percent of public college students are enrolled in the two-year sector compared with 60 percent in California, Illinois, and Wyoming. These discrepancies have enormous policy implications for state financial aid programs and other efforts to increase educational opportunities.²

In answer to financial concerns, we have seen the birth of a free-community-college movement as well as the implementation in what’s commonly called “Promise” programs. According to the Campaign for Free College Tuition, a bipartisan, intergenerational coalition:

States such as Tennessee and Oregon, which have made their community colleges tuition free, found the money for these programs by making it a priority in their state budgeting process. Any state could do the same. Over three dozen communities have also made college tuition free by instituting “Promise Programs,” which offer, in effect, place-based college scholarships for their residents. . . While none of these sources depend on federal government revenue, many of them make maximum use of existing student aid programs such as Pell Grants to help fund their “promise.”³

Despite such well-intentioned efforts, statistics for Fall 2015 from the National Student Clearinghouse Research Center (NSCRC) show a considerable enrollment drop at two-year public institutions. Based on 2013 and 2014 figures, NSCRC estimated an enrollment decline of more than .5 million students, with students over the age of 24 accounting for 89 percent of the decline.⁴

Other recent statistics from NSCRC reveal a consistent decline in completion rates in recent years contributed, in part, to declining enrollment rates that were once surging during the Great Recession but have now stagnated because of an economic rebound.⁵

“The U.S. economy continues to rebound, finally reaching employment levels that exceed those prior to the Great Recession,” explained Victor M.H. Borden, Professor of Educational Leadership and Policy Studies at the University of Indiana Bloomington. “However, there are some weak spots in the economy, including limited wage growth, significant employment in part-time positions, and a high number of individuals who have completely dropped out of the workforce.”⁶

In addition to a rebounding, post-recession economy, other factors come into play. For one, manufacturing jobs are simply not coming back in many parts of the country, as automation and off shoring of manufacturing jobs continues to displace people who once had solid jobs in the manufacturing sector. Despite this trend, enrollments are not increasing. Some have also pointed out that going to college for many people is simply too costly than the alternative of keeping their relatively low-paying jobs and not going to college at all. Others have claimed that many students may enroll in general education courses and then rely on corporate training for the remainder of their education and job skilling requirements. Another line of thought stresses how the media has continuously devalued higher education, causing a low enrollment backlash.⁷

What does all this mean for community colleges? It means getting creative and finding innovative



solutions that can boost programs that show the greatest promise for sustained enrollment growth. It means collaborating with more entities to make positive things happen.

In this monograph, and in the spirit of collaboration overall, The SOURCE on Community College Issues, Trends & Strategies and the staff of the National American University Roueche Graduate Center’s Doctor of Education in Community College Leadership program interviewed 18 community college professionals and scanned some of the latest research to present a general overview of successful collaborations that help keep community colleges afloat and successful.

TEN COMMUNITY COLLEGES

Austin Community College

We begin this foray into community college collaborations with an outstanding two-year public institution that has been making great strides due, in large part, to its location in a high-business-growth city, Austin Community College (ACC).



The ACCelerator Lab

A relatively recent example of how collaborating with outside entities can bring about significant change can be seen in ACC's development of the ACCelerator Lab. Through a partnership with real estate investment and development company RedLeaf Properties LLC, ACC started to buy up Austin's slowly dying and oldest indoor shopping center, the Highland Mall, in pieces, beginning with the shuttered Dillard's and Macy's stores in 2010, the J.C. Penney in 2011, and finally the entire mall in 2012. ACC and RedLeaf aligned themselves with the City of Austin's Airport Boulevard Initiative, an effort to reimagine and rejuvenate a car-oriented streetscape. That collaboration put the wheels in motion for the first phase of ACC's urban-education revitalization aspirations: the reconfiguration of the former J.C. Penney store into a 32,000 square foot "ACCelerator" learning lab, which opened in the fall of 2014.

The lab has become a highly successful operation, with collaborative elements on multiple levels. Open to the entire ACC campus, the lab features more than 600 Dell virtualized desktop workstations. One of its main components is that it hosts a cadre of academic coaches who work alongside students who frequent the lab seven days a week.

"With our team of coaches, we have an environment that nurtures a really collaborative atmosphere where we all work across all kinds of different areas."

— Stacey Güney
Director, ACCelerator Lab

Overall the lab is built around a durable infrastructure with a robust network for giving students easy access to campus resources. "It's like a high technology, modern, one-room schoolhouse," said lab Director Stacey Güney.⁸

That includes being a Google school, she added. "We educate all of our students on how to use a Google Drive and all of the other Google tools, such as gmail, that we make available to them when they get an ACCelerator account with us." It also includes providing onsite developmental education support services, such as a wide variety of face-to-face and software-related services in remedial math and English, as well as advisement services outside of academics.

Many students, for instance, "are struggling with what it means to be a student," Güney explained, "with things like time management and how to get organized and other types of things. With our team of coaches, we have an environment that nurtures a really collaborative atmosphere where we all work across all kinds of different areas."

Advisory Committees Support Technical Programs

That notion of working collaboratively with numerous departments across the ACC campus applies to basically all the programs offered to students at ACC, especially as it relates to developing curricula that local industries support and provide input to on a regular basis. Mike Midgley, Vice President

“We are very engaged with a lot of different groups, and we try to align our programs to the regional economy. For Austin, that means that we are heavily into IT; we are heavy into creative media, including video game development and design – all of those things.”

— **Mike Midgley**
Vice President of Instruction

of Instruction, explained how all the technical programs at ACC have industry advisory committees – it is, in fact, a state requirement. Members are drawn directly from the industries related to the various programs. Currently ACC has more than 700 advisory committee members. Additionally, there is a lot of interaction between hiring managers/human resources people and local companies. The college is also involved in the Health Workforce Alliance of Central Texas, an organization with representatives from all of the major hospitals. ACC also works with UT Austin and Texas State University to coordinate the validation of clinical placements of nursing students.

Typically, the advisory committees are comprised of anywhere from five to 15 professionals in their respective fields. “So, for the automotive industry, the folks of the committee are largely doing the kind of work that we are training our students to do,” Midgley said. “They advise the program to make sure we are up to date and doing the right things.”

Due to Austin being a hotbed of modern industry, ACC has aligned with a strong amalgam of outside workforce people. “We look at the market information data; we talk to the chambers of commerce; we talk to the workforce boards,” Midgley continued.

“We are very engaged with a lot of different groups, and we try to align our programs to the regional economy. For Austin, that means that we are heavily into IT; we are heavy into creative media, including video game development and design – all of those things.”

Productive Continuing Ed at ACC

There are plenty of workforce-oriented partnerships happening through ACC’s Continuing Education Division, where Dean Hector Aguilar proudly points to “the Samsung Project” as a great example of such partnerships. The college committed to training 460 technicians and engineers in 12 technical topics over a three-year period. In the first two years, the results have been impressive, with over 1,500 Samsung employees being trained in 64 different topic areas. Further, beyond receiving training that will help employees become more productive in their current position, some employees will also receive credit hours that will count toward an associate degree at the college.

Programs like these are partially funded by the state, mostly through the Texas Workforce Commission. This type of work has a direct impact on the development of more advanced curricula in other programs, including special certificates. In addition, outreach with companies such as Samsung gives the college great exposure overall to help boost enrollments, Aguilar said. “When we receive money from the state to do these projects, we develop more advanced courses for our business partners, and for the industry,” he added. “Through the development process, we train our own instructors to deliver the quality training our business partners desire. Quality is a priority, for us. The training must be top notch.

“Also, through these projects, we are able to develop courses and purchase equipment that can be leveraged to deliver training to cus-

“Through these projects, we are able to develop courses and purchase equipment that can be leveraged to deliver training to customers with similar needs. This work leads to new credit-bearing courses and programs being developed for our traditional students at the college as well,”

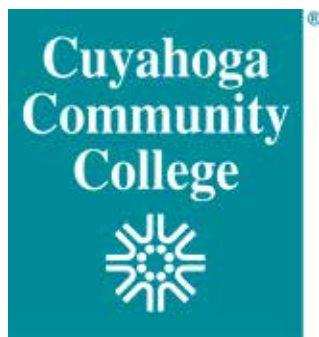
— **Hector Aguilar**
Dean of Continuing Education

tomers with similar needs. This work leads to new credit-bearing courses and programs being developed for our traditional students at the college as well,” Aguilar explained.

ACC also helps the unemployed and underemployed find work more quickly by offering over 100 short training programs. These programs provide students with a much greater chance of obtaining employment, as well as earning an industry certification and, possibly, college credit.

Cuyahoga Community College

At Cuyahoga Community College (Tri-C), the practice of collaborating with outside entities is fully identifiable and personified in its Corporate College. Founded in 2003, Tri-C’s Corporate College was the brainchild of President Emerita Jerry Sue Thornton. Corporate College programs have a continuing professional development orientation in partnership with the local business community, along with a large portion of incumbent worker



training programs (hourly workers in particular). Students come to Corporate College in a variety of ways, mostly sponsored by their employers.

Promoting Organizational Effectiveness

The Corporate College, which has two primary locations in Cleveland East and West, has its own professional brand and identity, although it is fully incorporated into Tri-C’s operations and promotional activities. Its core competencies revolve around corporate training, with a particular focus on organizational effectiveness and leadership training. They also do a lot of outreach and work in concert with local economic development organizations, such as the Chamber of Commerce, and they have an impressive staff with top-notch credentials.

Both locations also feature the appropriate space and facility rental services suitable for corporate conferences and trade shows, training sessions, board meetings, etc., including catering amenities.

On the training side, “we have great frontline supervisor and incumbent worker training programs specifically geared toward emerging leaders,” said President and CEO of Corporate College Robert Peterson. Leadership training includes both classroom work and assessments. “We do 360 assessments, strength finders, Meyers-Briggs, etc. So we are certified in those areas to apply assessment tools to individuals, interpret the results, and then provide one-on-one coaching.”

Leadership training goes hand-in-hand with the organizational effectiveness side of Corporate College’s services and programs. “We have our organizational practice, which has a consulting element to it and includes team building and helping organizations deal with change,” Peterson explained. “That includes, downsizing, financial troubles, an acquisition or merger, and losing your identity because

you have a new parent company – so we are experts in change management. We also provide soft skills training and diversity training.”

Next is the quality and continuous improvement side of the house, supported by a wide range of non-credit programs geared toward improving the quality of their products and services and eliminating any waste. For example, Corporate College provides full-on training programs in Lean Six Sigma and ISO quality standards.

All of this work is also supported by Corporate College’s professional development course offerings available in such areas as accounting, finance and tax; business and performance development; compliance; customer service; event planning; and information technology.

Mission-Driven to Assist Ohio’s Employers

“We are not revenue-driven,” Peterson added. “We are not profit driven, but we certainly want to cover our costs.” All Corporate College revenues go into a general fund. “We are mission-driven to do the right thing and help employers. If there is a situation where it is beyond our scope and capability, we will not undertake it. We would refer them to someone whom we felt would do a better job, because our mission is to help employers have a skilled workforce.”

So, when an Ohio employer calls Corporate College to explore possibilities for assistance, the process starts with a needs assessment overview and a first-step meeting with company representatives, such as supervisory personnel and senior-level management, who may be seeking some kind of training for their staff. “We will make sure that we understand what their goals are,” Peterson explained. “We’ll look at prior training to see what has worked. We will do surveys of the

“Our mission is to help employers have a skilled workforce.”

**— Robert Peterson
President and CEO of Corporate College**

workforce that needs to be trained so that we understand what specific issues are needed to be addressed, and then we will make our recommended solutions to the employers.” Such recommendations might include pointing them to the appropriate curriculum that the college can offer, combined with assessments or coaching exercises that would bring about positive outcomes. “That is our holistic approach,” he noted. “It is similar to somebody going to a doctor’s office, getting bloodwork and/or an EKG or X-Ray. The test results come back and you diagnose the issue as X, and here is the prescription that is going to fix X.”

All of these services are enabled by a professional Corporate College staff that includes two industrial psychologists and a wide variety of subject matter experts with advanced degrees who have also worked in the private sector, giving them both the skills needed to train and advise, as well as the first-hand-experience empathetic ears that facilitate a keen understanding of the issues they need to address.



Wichita Area Technical College

A model of teamwork between multiple outside entities to bring about dynamic change can be found at Wichita Area Technical College (WATC), where a collaboration between government, private industry, and education resulted in building a \$54 million National Center for Aviation Training (NCAT) that opened in 2010.

WATC manages the Center.

“We do all the teaching,” said WATC

President

Sheree Utash. The college collaborates with local Sedgwick County representatives; Wichita-based aviation industry stalwarts from Boeing, Spirit AeroSystems, Cessna, Hawker Beechcraft, and Learjet; along with a special partnership with Wichita State University’s National Institute for Aviation Research (NIAR). The overriding goal has always been to set down a viable and strong education infrastructure for building a skilled aviation-oriented workforce well into the future through the formation of the NCAT.

“What we did was ask ‘what are the best jobs we are going to need in the future in your industry,’”

Utash explained.

The result was a plethora of programs in sheet metal assembly, advanced coat-

ing and painting, airframe and power plant technology, robotics, industrial maintenance, non-destructive testing, industrial automation, avionics, electronics, and predictive maintenance, Utash said.



“All of the curriculum for each of these new programs was built with subject matter experts from the aviation industry coming and sitting down at the table with faculty and instructional designers.”

— Sheree Utash
President, WATC

Working with Experts and Meeting Industry Needs

“All of the curriculum for each of these new programs was built with subject matter experts from the aviation industry coming and sitting down at the table with faculty and instructional designers,” Utash said. “And that continues to be the case as we move into program review and continue to look at our curriculum. We always bring the industry to the table to tell us what they need and how their needs have changed. They look at our projects; they look at our outcomes; they look at the graduates; they look at how well they are prepared, where they might have deficiencies, and then we tweak the curriculum in order to continue to try to do our best to meet the needs of the aviation industry.”

WATC offers a variety of degree and certificate options throughout its aviation department, including two-year associate of applied science degrees, one-year certificate programs and less-than-one-semester certificates of completion.

Utash added that not only do these programs have an effect on the local aviation industry, but also on the wider aviation supply chain industrial complex comprised of numerous small, medium, and large businesses in Kansas that provide parts and services to the industry both locally and globally.

How has all this impacted enrollment at WATC? “We have seen our enrollments go up dramatically,” Utash said.

Relationship Building to Boost Enrollments

One tool that has become popular in attracting students to these programs was instituted in December 2015, whereby graduates of the composites technology and sheet metal assembly programs are guaranteed interviews for possible employment with Spirit AeroSystems. Even when a job applicant seeking a position at Spirit AeroSystems does not have the training or credential and does not get hired, the Spirit AeroSystems human resources department will recommend that applicant, through a formal communication, to obtain a degree or certificate at WATC and re-apply after graduating.

Of course, such collaborative initiatives took time to develop. “This has evolved over several years of working with industry and being very attentive to their needs and having them involved in what you’re doing, building your curriculum, sustaining your curriculum, meeting with your classroom, going on tours in their facilities,” Utash said. “There is a lot of relationship building.”

WATC’s work in the aviation industry continues to expand, in particular, by focusing on widening its information and sharing pipeline with employers. This requires, according to Utash, a certain mindset and willingness to take constructive criticism and make changes, along with having a relatively large body of faculty members employed by the college who have worked for or are currently working in the industry. “We are very fortunate in that regard,” she said. “Our faculty understand the idea of industry needs changing, and skill sets changing, and work needs changing. Those are key pieces. Your faculty have to be open to change. It can’t be ‘this is how we have always done it.’”

Northern Virginia Community College and Community College of Baltimore County

Jobs in the field of cybersecurity (also called “information security”) are still on the upswing, continuing to grow in numbers with the constant expansion of our digital age applications into all walks of life. A July 2015 annual report by Burning Glass Technolo-

gies points out that in

addition to plenty of cyber jobs typically available at

government agencies, “hiring has boomed in industries handling consumer data like finance (up 137 percent in the past five years), health care (up 121 percent) and retail (up 89 percent).”⁹ The Bureau of Labor Statistics projects an 18 percent growth rate for information security analyst jobs from 2014 to 2024 – that’s 11 percent more than the average growth rate for all occupations.¹⁰

“Community college leaders scan the environment in order to be sure that the programs offered by their colleges are relevant and needed,” says George Boggs, President and CEO Emeritus, American Association of Community Colleges. “One of the most rapidly emerging areas of the workforce is cybersecurity. It now sits at the nexus of some of the most urgent and important needs for our country: the need to ensure privacy while protecting security; the need for our national security; our need to develop and deliver innovative education; and our need to prepare people for good, well-paying jobs.”



“It wasn’t until we provided an AAS in cybersecurity that we saw explosive growth in which we went from 49 students at the end of Fall 2014 to 746 students and still growing.”

— **Margaret Leary**
NOVA Cybersecurity Professor

Collaborating with ATE Center Helps Tremendously

Northern Virginia Community College (NOVA) and the Community College of Baltimore County (CCBC) are two institutions leading the way in this field, among many across the U.S. NOVA’s Cybersecurity Center and CCBC’s Institute for Cybersecurity collaborate with the National CyberWatch Center, the largest of five National Science Foundation (NSF) Advanced Technological Education (ATE) security technology consortia, and an important source for a wide variety of services and information that help community colleges offering cybersecurity programs remain current.



Corby Hovis, NSF program director, said that “keeping faculty up to date and bringing new faculty in who can teach in that area has been very important, so our ATE centers have played an enormous role in providing faculty development. They have also played an enormous role in providing curriculum development in cybersecurity at the community college level. We gain new members all the time because community colleges want to start new programs and reach out to our centers as valuable resources for getting them off the ground.”

The National Cyberwatch Center has more than 100 community college members, all working collaboratively to “advance cybersecurity education and strengthen the national cybersecurity workforce.”¹¹ Casey O’Brien is the Executive Director and Principal Investigator of the National CyberWatch Center, which is headquartered at Prince George’s Community College in Largo, Maryland, geographically close to both Nova and CCBC, in the Washington, D.C. region, a hotbed for federal contractor cybersecurity jobs.

O’Brien explained how the National CyberWatch Center helps college presidents, academic officers, faculty and staff understand how information security could fit into course, degree and certificate program development. “Information security has applicability across all academic domains,” he said. “It might be one module in an automotive program, or something for a psychology class about motivations of Internet attackers. . . They may want to get these concepts socialized across various disciplines, and maybe extend them to develop a full-on degree or certificate program.”¹²

Impressive Numbers

NOVA Cybersecurity Professor Margaret Leary noted how NOVA became one of the first schools in the country to have a cybersecurity certificate program in 2002. But, “it wasn’t until we provided an AAS in cybersecurity that we saw explosive growth in which we went from 49 students at the end of Fall 2014 to 746 students and still growing.” Noell Damron, program chair of CCBC’s Network Technology/Cyber Security division said that enrollment in CCBC’s Network Technology and Information Systems Security certificate and degree programs followed a similar trajectory and grew from 30 to 60 students in 2008, to about 700 today.¹³

Working collaboratively with four-year institutions is another important aspect of these

programs, as some of the highest-paying jobs in the field typically require a minimum of a bachelor's degree, and students who enroll at the two-year degree level insist on being assured a solid transfer lane. "We have established transfer pathways to senior institutions, including George Mason University, Marymount, Capitol Technology University, University of Maryland University College, and Excelsior," Leary said.

Houston Community College

Dual enrollment programs, also called dual credit and early college high school programs, are definitely great enrollment



boosters for community colleges, and their numbers are growing rapidly for a variety of reasons, perhaps the most evident being that it saves students and their families on the overall cost of earning a degree. Students enrolled in dual credit courses take community college level classes at their high school. High school students enrolled in dual enrollment courses typically take community college level classes at the higher education institution's campus. In both scenarios (under the banner of early college high school), students still in high school are given the opportunity to earn college-level credit toward an associate's degree while simultaneously working toward their high school diplomas.

Houston Community College (HCC) is one of many institutions across the country building its infrastructure to accommodate dual credit/early college high school programs. It currently serves six school districts in its area.

HCC's dual credit and early college high school programs have recently been revamped and centralized, and the college is

"Part of the strategy we have been utilizing here is going out and having face-to-face time with our school districts. We are in schools on a daily basis. We are coordinating with principals and in the district level administrative realm."

— Catherine O'Brien
Associate Vice Chancellor, College Readiness

seeing a huge boost in dual enrollments, up about 44% in 2016 over 2015.

HCC administrators have lots of face-to-face interaction with district partners, and lots of coordination with principals and district-level administrators. Dual credit success coaches work directly with students at the high schools; they also hold parent workshops as well as a comprehensive professional development programs for dual credit faculty members. A new advertising and marketing campaign has also been created as the programs continue to expand.

A dual credit school district advisory board committee with faculty and administrative representatives from the six districts collaborate regularly. Catherine O'Brien, Associate Vice Chancellor, College Readiness, explained that "collectively we get together on a regular basis to discuss any issues of concern or to get positive feedback about what they would like to see more of, and that has proven to be very successful.

"Part of the strategy we have been utilizing here is going out and having face-to-face time with our school districts," O'Brien added. "We are in schools on a daily basis. We are coordinating with principals and in the district level administrative realm. We've really been trying to display a model of outstanding customer service. We have completely pooled our resources together so that we are using a unified approach with all of our schools."

As noted on the HCC dual credit site, “students demonstrating college readiness through a State of Texas approved college placement test can earn dual credit by taking an approved college class offered at a high school, HCC campus, or online.

“Dual credit classes are taught by educators who are expected to mirror the profile of a traditional college instructor (e.g., credentials, course rigor) and classroom (e.g., instructional materials/equipment).”

Tuition and fees for dual credit students are waived, courtesy of the HCC College Board of Trustees along with partial state funding. Additionally, the board recently approved a first-of-its-kind plan to waive the out-of-district fees for dual credit students. Beginning with the fall semester 2016, any high school student in the Greater Houston region can enroll in the dual credit program at HCC at no cost.

The state of Texas opened up dual credit courses to a wider student population by allowing 9th and 10th graders in as long as they meet the college readiness guidelines, resulting in program enrollment increases. However, not every student in the program ultimately graduates with an associate degree when they earn their high school diploma. Instead, as O’Brien noted, some, for example, may earn 12 credits of core curriculum courses (more or less) and then be assisted with completing admission applications to be enrolled at HCC after they graduate from high school. “We do hope that the students in our area become HCC students after graduation,” she said. “I’m finding that more and more parents are very interested when they hear that their child can come to HCC for the first two years of their degree program and then transfer to a four-year institution. We show them the comparisons of how much money they can save.

“We are definitely seeing an incredibly positive effect for the efforts that are taking place through our collaborations with the school districts,” O’Brien said.

Meanwhile, as a simple marketing tool, O’Brien and her staff are sending out letters to high school graduates that show them an example of what a HCC course schedule looks like, beginning with a list of courses newly enrolled freshmen will likely be required to take. “So they can visualize what a schedule looks like,” O’Brien explained, “we want them to be as informed as possible so that they are aware of how many opportunities are available to them.”

Greenville Technical College

The Greenville
ville
Technical
College (GTC)
Center for Man-
ufacturing In-



novation (CMI) is a model of collaboration between a variety of entities, including four-year institutions and big business, with this particular example attentive to the manufacturing arena. Through a collaboration with Clemson University and numerous industry partners, such as GE, Bosch, Michelin, and BMW, GTC recently opened a brand new, high-tech, 100,000 square foot manufacturing-specific building.

South Carolina is known as one of the top states in the country on a per-capita basis for attracting manufacturing to its famous I-85 corridor between Atlanta and Charlotte. According to David Clayton, CMI Executive Director, “the real impetus for the building and the programming is to grow the capacity of trained technical talent for the manufacturing industry in South Carolina.”

Such goals are being met through collaborations between researchers, educators, engineers, and advanced manufacturing experts already working in the field who strive toward modernizing curricula and supporting students on quests into new career pathways. The collaboration between GTC and Clemson University greatly enhances the development of courses and transfer options in such associated degree and certificate programs in machine tool technology, CNC machining, and mechatronics.

In addition, the Center will be a first-class facility for corporate training and continuing education options in such subjects as industrial automation, robotics, additive manufacturing, metrology, and manufacturing process design. As noted on the CMI site, “by bringing together interested students, respected faculty and motivated employers, CMI offers the opportunity to change people’s lives in the short- and long-term. Our programs are flexible and customizable, ensuring that students can find their place within advanced manufacturing and not only start working, but continue to grow as life-long students of the industry.”

In addition to offering more than 100,000 square feet of manufacturing space with modern equipment for students and faculty to partake in real-life, project-based teaching and learning experiences, the Center also has 24,000 square feet of high bay space, 10,000 square feet of Clemson University lab space, 22 offices, nine classrooms, a separate pneumatics/hydraulics lab, a metrology lab, a prototyping lab, open collaborative spaces, a business incubator, and an executive conference room.

In short, the new building adds a lot to an already robust number of special programs and partnerships GTC has already established. One of those is GTC’s manufacturing honors

“If a company says they need to hire 100 assemblers in the next six months, we can develop a custom training program to meet their needs, and the state will help pay for it.”

— **David Clayton**
CMI Executive Director

program, which is collaborating with Clemson University to create a joint capstone project. In this scenario, Clemson advanced manufacturing graduate-level students will spend part of their time at the Center working on projects with GTC students.

Another interesting collaboration that will use the Center for local workforce development and support will be facilitated through GTC working with a state-wide program called ReadySC, which is an economic development organization that is managed and run by South Carolina’s Technical College System, comprised of 16 technical colleges that prepare South Carolina’s workforce to meet the needs of local companies. “If a company says they need to hire 100 assemblers in the next six months, we can develop a custom training program to meet their needs, and the state will help pay for it,” Clayton said. “It’s really set up to meet the needs of employers no matter what stage they are in, what sector, what industry. As long as they are paying a good living wage, we are going to work with them to make it happen.”

Overall, the Center will become an integral part of GTC’s five-campus system, with nearly 30,000 students across more than 100 curriculum programs and short-term training choices for career and personal development. The mission, in brief, is to give employers a ready supply of skilled workers and provide students with an education that will help them succeed. In the process, en-

rollments should grow. “The goal is to double the pipeline of students coming in,” Clayton explained. “We hope that with new programs, and the way we are going to offer them, along with this very nice building, will be a magnet for students.”

Chattanooga State Community College

From 2008 through 2012 when the entire country was reeling from the Great Recession, Chattanooga State Community College’s Engineering & Information Technologies Department was forging ahead with establishing partnerships with two German companies that resulted in the construction of two outstanding facilities, the Volkswagen Academy and the Wacker Institute. Both are state-of-the-art manufacturing training facilities that combine hands-on experience with Chattanooga State’s top-notch associate degree programs in Engineering Systems Technology, Mechatronics Systems Concentration (at the Academy), and a Chemical Engineering Technology program, along with two special Mechatronic degree programs (at the Institute).



These collaborations have formed an innovative blending of American-style education and German-style apprenticeship programs that have been highly successful, explained Tim McGhee, Chattanooga State’s Dean, Engineering & Information Technologies.

The Academy, which was built with state economic development funding, got its start in 2008 when Chattanooga State and the state of Tennessee began collaborating with

“We’ve historically had a strong manufacturing workforce here, and we have a ready workforce, meaning there are folks here we can train. If you look at 2008-09, the economy was in pretty bad shape. So, it was a good time to build.”

— **Tim McGhee, Dean, Engineering & Information Technologies**

Volkswagen on the construction of a 163,000 square foot training center that opened its doors in June 2010. The aim of the Academy has always been to provide customized training alongside academic studies to new hires for the company’s manufacturing plants.

Other partners in the project include the Hamilton County Department of Education Tennessee Technology Center, Tennessee Technological University and the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga.

All the pilot plant equipment and associated construction was self-funded by Wacker Polysilicon, headquartered in Germany. Wacker began negotiation with the college in 2010 and ultimately allocated funds to Chattanooga State to help build out this initiative, resulting in the grand opening, in January 2012, of a 25,000 square foot training facility located on the Chattanooga State campus, “just up the road from Volkswagen,” said McGhee. “Wacker sought out a training provider, and they were not getting money from the state, so they met with several schools. We had to provide a proposal. When they chose us, they gave us a grant to build the facility. So, while we were doing Volkswagen, we were essentially doing the same thing for Wacker.

“We’ve historically had a strong manufacturing workforce here, and we have a ready workforce, meaning there are folks here we can train. If you look at 2008-09, the economy was in pretty bad shape. So, it was a good time to build.”

McGhee added that Chattanooga State’s relationship with the state’s economic development efforts has proven to be a big benefit for luring foreign companies to the area, especially from the automotive industry around the globe. He pointed toward two more initiatives that have brought companies there in 2016, one is a Chinese tier-one automotive interior supplier/manufacturer and the other is a Spanish automotive metal components maker.

“It puts a lot of pressure on us to educate, train, and prepare people to work for these folks,” McGhee said. “In 2008, in my department there were seven instructors, a technician, a secretary, and me. Today we have 49 full-time faculty and staff.”

Relative to enrollment growth, McGhee explained that the college swelled to its highest number of students in 2008 to 2012, during the heyday years of the recession. “As the economy improved and these jobs became available, of course, people who want to go to work, go to work,” meaning enrollments have dropped and the draw for adult, non-traditional-aged students has dropped. The college has changed its recruitment efforts to reflect the times by now more strongly focusing on attracting traditional-aged students in the range of 18 to 21 years of age. “They are probably still living at home with mom and dad. They don’t have to work yet,” McGhee noted.

Additionally, similar to other community colleges across the country, Chattanooga State has increasingly been reaching out to

high schools. For example, the Engineering & Information Technologies Department Division and Volkswagen recently started a project that brings high school juniors to the Academy. “We’re recruiting from high schools because that is our natural resource, that is renewable every year,” McGhee said. “When the recession hit, we were flooded with adult students because they came back to school to re-fit, re-skill, skill-up. But they are back at work now. We are less than five percent unemployment in Chattanooga, and that is really those folks who are probably unemployed, or do not want to work and may not be looking for a job. So we are pushing it now, and it is an extremely tight market.”

McGhee added that “we have about 100 percent job placement of all of our graduates.”

Northeast Wisconsin Technical College

In the early to mid-2000s, President of Northeast Wisconsin Technical College (NWTC) H. Jeffrey Rafn began to engage in a collaborative process with local hospitals to come up with a unique solution that would enable them to provide badly needed health-care services to the rural, mostly poverty-level population



north of Brown County. That process led to the grand opening of the N.E.W. Health and Dental Clinic in 2006, located on the NWTC campus, funded by a U.S. Department of Health and Human Services grant that was expanded a second time in 2012. In addition, financial support to sustain daily operations at the N.E.W. Clinic is provided by three local hospitals: Belin Hospital, St. Mary’s Hospital, and St. Vincent Hospital.

N.E.W. Clinic is a teaching medical clinic serving uninsured, underinsured, Medicaid and Medical Assistance patients, while enhancing the education of health care students who are attending a variety of NWTC health-care-oriented degree programs. The entire initiative has brought highly positive exposure to NWTC's healthcare programs overall, resulting in a great community outreach program that is simultaneously helping to boost program awareness and steady enrollments at the college.

Bonnie Kuhr, N.E.W. Clinic CEO, said that the students who wind up working at the Clinic "become vested in their community. The respiratory therapy students come in and work with our asthmatics and our chronic lung disease patients, teaching them how to use inhalers; we've had students doing foot care on our diabetics; we've had all sorts of initiatives that have gone through the Clinic.

"It has been a real win-win. The community sees it as a wonderful opportunity to help those in need, and the students are getting hands-on experience in real life medical care."

The Clinic's staff includes a Clinic coordinator, two medical assistants, a medical lab technician, a receptionist/interpreter, and a health benefits access coordinator. The Clinic also has a full-time healthcare provider who is a licensed Physician Assistant (PA) and a part-time healthcare provider who is an MD. NWTC students are hired as medical assistants on a revolving basis as they cycle in and out of the college.

More than 30,000 patients visited the Clinic since it opened in June 2006 through the end of March 2016. Some additional facts, courtesy of the Clinic, include:

- 65% of the clinic patients surveyed said that if the Clinic services had not been available, they would have gone to a Hospital Emergency Center.

"It has been a real win-win. The community sees it as a wonderful opportunity to help those in need, and the students are getting hands-on experience in real life medical care."

— **Bonnie Kuhr**
N.E.W. Clinic CEO

- 94% of patients surveyed said the Clinic met their immediate health care needs.
- The minority population in Brown County has increased during the past decade, increasing the need for quality, cost-effective care.
- 60 to 65% of patient visits to the Clinic require an English/Spanish Interpreter.
- In 2015, more than 416 Clinic patients were assisted by 72 NWTC students enrolled in a variety of health sciences programs.
- In addition to respiratory therapy students, the Clinic consistently works with associate degree nursing students who assist with patient care; medical assistant program students for patient intake and care processes; and health care business services program students for customer relations, telephone techniques, office management, data analysis, and the use of information technology systems.

Kuhr added that she believes the Clinic has always and continues to be great exposure for local citizens who "maybe would not think about the college, but now are coming on campus. They learn about all the programs available to them. It is helpful for these patients. They are learning what the buildings are like, what parking is like, and becoming comfortable with the campus."

Guilford Technical Community College

Community colleges are laser-like focused on helping people fulfill their dreams by



offering meaningful programs that meet the knowledge and skill needs for employees and for entrepreneurs who work inside a variety of industries. GTCC took a unique approach in achieving that goal when past President Emeritus Donald Cameron put the wheels in motion for one of his long-time personal dreams to create a one-of-a-kind Entertainment Technology AAS program for country music professionals. As noted by Melinda M. Valdez-Ellis in a chapter of “Rising to the Challenge: Lessons Learned from Guilford Technical Community College,” Cameron got the wheels in motion for the creation of this program back in 1998 when he met Larry Gatlin at a local event and asked him if he’d be interested in helping out. One year after that meeting, Cameron and Gatlin put together a team of music and entertainment industry experts to get the program off the ground. In addition, passage of a bond referendum provided GTCC with funds to build a state-of-the-art facility, completed in 2004 with the appropriate equipment and acoustics, to house the program.¹⁴

A strong curriculum, based on the expertise of numerous industry professionals, is the hallmark of what is today called the Larry Gatlin School of Entertainment Technology (LGSET). Additionally, LGSET was developed when Cameron and his key staff reached outside to three colleges that already had similar programs at St. Petersburg College, Austin Community College, and Middle Tennessee State University.

“We pretty much fill up every seat, every semester. We know what we are doing, and it comes from industry experience.”

— **Thomas Johnson, Department Chair of Creative & Performing Arts**

Thomas Johnson, Department Chair of Creative & Performing Arts, who has been with the program since it started, explained some of the program’s history. “We were in business [with a degree program in Entertainment Technology] four years before the building was built in 2004, and we started reaching out to everybody in the music business to put together an advisory committee,” he said.

For example, as noted by Valdez-Ellis, some of the music professionals who joined in as inaugural faculty members included Johnson, an audio engineer who has worked with such labels as Sony Music, Warner Bros., Capitol Records, and many others in the music industry, and Songwriter Kristy Jackson, known for the post 9/11 song “Little Did She Know (She Kissed A Hero),” which became the #1 most requested song among New York radio stations and elsewhere after 9/11.¹⁵

In its first year of operation in 2000, the program attracted 80 students. By the time it had opened the doors of its new state-of-the-art facility in 2004 at the High Point campus, enrollments had tripled, with a good portion of students coming in from areas well outside of what GTCC typically draws from its local geographic region. Today, in a strong example of a sustainable program that attracts new students regularly, the program consistently hosts about 280 to 300 students annually. “We pretty much fill up every seat, every semester,” Johnson said. “We know what we are doing, and it comes from industry experience.”

As explained by Valdez-Ellis, “a unique student population benefits from the LGSET curriculum. The high percentage of LGSET students from outside the county (56%) results in a positive economic impact to the area, as well as a diversity of musical ideas in the classroom. Their endurance and willingness to succeed in the program is evidence of the program’s positive reputation.”¹⁶

Johnson said that students in the program range from high-school age to adults in their 30s, 40s, and even 60s. “I think it ends up being about people having a dream about being in the entertainment business, and this program gives them a chance to potentially fulfill that dream.”

TRENDS & ISSUES

The ten community colleges just briefly profiled reveal only a relatively small sample of highly promising collaborative efforts between higher education institutions and outside entities that help increase enrollments and sustain revenues. There are many more. Below, we try to address some of the relatively large and highly important trends and issues happening today that can influence enrollment numbers, persistence, student success and increased sources of revenue.

Marketing

Promoting an institution can be an expensive advertising, marketing and public relations effort, but it is necessary and often cost prohibitive.



For some practical marketing advice, Debra Halsey, the Executive Director of the National Council for Marketing & Public Relations, an affiliate of the American Association of Community Colleges, offered five marketing-to-boost-enrollments tactics, all of which “require a minimal financial investment”:

1. Target Audiences with Geofencing – Basically this is a practice whereby an institution sends out pop-up adds to mobile phones in a specific geographic location.
2. Find Hidden Prospects – These include following up with registration no-shows, students who have listed your college on their FAFSA, high schoolers who listed your college as a recipient of their SAT scores, and dual enrollment students and stop-outs who may have skipped a semester.
3. The Power of Personal Touch – As an example, Halsey pointed to Central Oregon Community College, which sends thank-you notes to all of its visitors.
4. Word of Mouth – Know what people are saying about you – their perceptions should be relevant to your messaging that should be shared by faculty and staff who understand how to put the prospective student/customer first.
5. Retention – Take out the time to send encouraging messages to your current student body on a consistent basis.¹⁷

Advice like this becomes valuable to community colleges that often have small budgets as well as small staffs in the marketing and communications arena.

Dual Enrollments/Early College High School

As noted in the Houston Community College example, dual credit programs are growing quickly and can be seen as a means to help offset some of the enrollment shrinkage of non-traditional, adult, working students who have put college on the back burner and found employment opportunities in an economy that is pulling out of the Great Recession.



For example, WATC President Utash mentioned “our high school enrollments for concurrent students is skyrocketing, and our adult enrollment, 18 plus, is declining. It has been this way for the last two or three years. Our student market has flip-flopped. When I got here seven years ago, this college was primarily adult-enrollment driven with an average age of 26. Today, we’ve got quite the reverse of that.”

So, WATC, while supporting dual enrollments, also has focused more keenly on getting adult-learners back into the fold. “We’re really looking toward learn-to-earn models, using apprenticeships and internships, trying to innovate in those ways to create incentivized educational career paths for both graduating high school students and adults,” Utash explained.

The success of dual enrollment programs across the country cannot be understated. In a 2014 report published by Jobs for the Future (JFF), it is noted that “over the past decade, early colleges have produced dramatic results, beating typical outcomes for the

“Our high school enrollments for concurrent students is skyrocketing, and our adult enrollment, 18 plus, is declining. It has been this way for the last two or three years. Our student market has flip-flopped.”

— Sheree Utash
President, WATC

low-income youth, first-generation college goers, and students of color they were designed to serve.”¹⁸

In 2002, JFF, with the endorsement of the U.S. Department of Education, launched Early College Designs, an initiative funded by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, the Dell Foundation, Lumina Foundation for Education, the Walton Family Foundation and others. Through its partnership with 13 organizations, the initiative continues to help to create or redesign schools across the nation that blend high school and college courses.

In recent years the DOE awarded \$15 million to Early College Designs in Denver and two areas of the Lower Rio Grande Valley in South Texas. “JFF is also a partner on a separate \$12 million Investing in Innovation grant to increase enrollment of high-need students in STEM disciplines utilizing Early College Designs. The National Center for Restructuring Education, Schools & Teaching at Teachers College, Columbia University is leading the initiative, which involves the Bridgeport Public Schools in Connecticut and four districts in Michigan. In addition to serving 20,000 students in 34 schools, the goal is to create a blueprint for STEM and early college programs for other school systems.”¹⁹

The Early College Designs initiative is one of many early college high school programs throughout our nation that are all expanding quickly.

The Future of Workforce Development at Community Colleges

Of course, whenever the topic of conversation dwells on enrollments and collaborations, best practices in the arena of workforce development and our country's state of the future of work come to the forefront.

The varied practices in workforce development at America's two-year institutions include



continuing education, non-credit oriented courses; a combination of industry-specific noncredit and credit offerings; as well as non-credit and credit corporate training programs. Additionally, there are many corporate-focused consulting and training services, such as those offered by the previously profiled Corporate College at Tri-C in Northeast Ohio. Such entities contribute greatly to both the marketing of an institution to its local constituencies as well as for enhancing the number of learners coming through community colleges' revolving doors.²⁰

The U.S. labor market has changed. According to research published in June 2016 by the Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce, workers with more than a high school diploma but less than a bachelor's degree, who are mostly employed in middle-skill jobs, total 30 percent of the U.S. workforce. For the first time, people who have earned four-year degrees occupy 36 percent of the workforce and those with a high school diploma or less occupy 34 percent.

Occupational and industry shifts have been major drivers of change in the labor market. Production industries, such as manufacturing, construction and natural resources, shifted from employing nearly half of the workforce in 1947 to only 19 percent in 2016. On the other hand, industries that employ managerial and professional workers such as healthcare, business, financial, education, and government services accounted for 28 percent of the workforce in 1947 and have grown to encompass 46 percent of the workforce today.²¹

To meet such workforce shifts, St. Louis Community College (STLCC) has an innovative workforce development department called the Workforce Solutions Group, which includes a Corporate College with an impressive 149,533 square foot facility that was launched in 2010. As noted on their site, "the Workforce Solutions Group of St. Louis Community College leverages education for growth in the knowledge economy by offering programs and services designed to advance people, businesses and communities. The Workforce Solutions Group accomplishes this through its operating units which include Corporate Services, Continuing Education and Community Services."²² Like all community college workforce development and customized training initiatives, such entities are committed to the advancement of corporate labor and leadership, which is always in some kind of flux, especially in today's rapidly changing digital world running in tandem with an unprecedented, desperate, generational-oriented future of work environment.

Community colleges overcome enrollment challenges through what's referred to as its "greatest assets," which are their employer partnerships. Affordable College researcher Greg Jarboe notes in an interview with Lisa Qing, a consultant with the Education Advi-

sory Board (EAB), a company that provides enrollment management services to community colleges, that

There are fewer prospective students available as high school graduating classes shrink and adult learners head back to work. Moreover, other institutions – not just for-profit colleges but also four-year universities – are increasingly competing with community colleges for students. To maintain enrollments in this landscape, community colleges have to find systematic and scalable strategies to recruit students. They don't have the vast marketing budgets of their competitors, but they do have other assets – including employer partnerships, which can make them very attractive to career-driven students.²³

In a 2016 PwC Consumer Intelligence Series report on the “state of jobs today and where they're headed,” in a section titled “Rethinking the Employee Value Proposition,” the importance of understanding a cross-section of Boomers, Gen Xers, Millennials, and Gen Zers who all have their own distinct wants, needs and ways of thinking looms large and brings about an increased level of leadership complexity. In addition, a number of highly important “strategic imperatives” for success in today's marketplace are listed, such as:

- Employers must “embrace technology as a significant driver in reshaping the future workforce.” The report mentioned how robotics and mobile technologies, in particular, are change drivers.
- Companies must “understand which cultural complexities are reshaped by shifting employee requirements.” In short, employees want to work on meaningful projects in which they feel valued.

- “Focus on employee experience to directly drive business performance.” Similar to above, companies are being asked to create “exceptional employee experiences from hire-to-retain.”²⁴

Often with much more limited budgets than their four-year counterparts, community colleges continue to successfully meet the endless needs of our changing industrial complex. In the process, their non-credit and credit-bearing courses and programs, along with their offering of company-specific workforce training services, if marketed wisely and consistently, experience enrollment sustainability. As noted at the end of a SOURCE report on workforce development, “this crucial role being actively implemented at community colleges everywhere deserves to be better supported by communities and states that truly benefit from this valuable resource.”²⁵

Developmental Education

Developmental/remedial education initiatives also play a pivotal role in our focus here on enrollment numbers, collaborative efforts and improved student outcomes.

The perennial challenge under this banner is all about keeping students in class who are mostly

unsatisfied (as well as unengaged) with the way they are being slotted into remedial courses that do not offer any credit toward a degree and eat up their financial aid. The literature on this challenge is plentiful, as are the solutions, which are as rich and varied as the number of community colleges that exist. The bottom line, however, is no different: keeping students engaged in remedial education courses is not an easy



task. Success in this arena requires innovative solutions.

As noted by John E. Roueche, president of the Roueche Graduate Center at National American University, “the question of how well students succeed in open-door colleges,” goes back to a paper he authored in 1968, titled “Salvage Redirection or Custody: Remedial Education in the Community Junior Colleges.” The answer then was “not very well at all. Very few students completed the remedial (developmental) sequence, and even fewer persisted into and through regular college courses.”²⁶

A look through all the literature on this topic reveals that not much has changed today.

Community colleges have historically addressed all the numerous challenges that come with helping underprepared students succeed. There are basically two schools of thought on this topic. One is that community colleges are insufficient in this arena, with inadequate placement-testing and less-than-stellar student support systems. The other is that community colleges are getting a lot smarter about developmental education and bringing about positive change through creative and innovative programs and initiatives that enable greater numbers of underprepared students to succeed and graduate.²⁷

Leveraging Services

Beyond developmental education, keeping students engaged in learning, in general, regardless of whether or not they are enrolled in remedial courses, is a challenging task. Add in the notion of using innovative technologies, keeping abreast of the latest and most effective data analytics software, and monitoring best practices related to student advising, and the task at hand of keeping students in college until they complete seems, at the very least, highly complex and overly multifaceted.



Enter the iPASS initiative, for Integrated Planning and Advising for Student Success, out of a partnership between Achieving the Dream and EDUCAUSE. It behooves all community colleges to keep an eye on this initiative because it does apply heavily to maintaining and possibly increasing enrollment numbers. Officially launched in September 2015, iPASS is providing technical assistance to 14 community and technical colleges that were awarded a three-year grant to leverage technology to enhance student support services in order to help students complete. The 14 colleges are in the process of adopting “an integrated, technology-supported approach to planning and advising that will enhance and streamline course advising, selection, and registration as well as the tracking of student progress.”²⁸

The overall initiative has identified “four support services essential to students’ successful persistence through and completion of high quality, high value credentials, as well as high-demand/high salary positions:

- “Education and career planning: Guiding students to select programs of study that are relevant to their academic goals and courses that fulfill the necessary program requirements.
- “Counseling and coaching: Connecting students to on and off-campus resources and enabling the creation of personalized action plans.
- “Targeting risk and intervention: Predicting course failure and program stop-out to support timely and effective interventions.
- “Transfer and articulation: Managing student flow between institutions to maximize credit transfer and degree completion.”

Achieving the Dream will leverage its network to accelerate effective adoption of iPASS by sharing what the organization learns throughout the three-year grant period through events, webinars, a blog, and the provision of new resources and service options.²⁹

In the area of student services, some interesting research has come out of the Education Advisory Board (EAB), an enrollment management company. Their findings from visiting with 20 + community colleges suggest that managing and providing “onboarding” services, which is the term for the registration and enrollment steps students must take before stepping into a classroom,” are in dire need of repair.

Student interviews reveal widespread confusion and frustration during this process. Our researchers interviewed students who waited hours to speak with an advisor or who selected academic majors at random; some had little appreciation for placement testing and didn’t understand the consequences of unnecessary devel-

opmental coursework. Student aggravations during onboarding negatively impact college enrollments: according to the National Center for Education Statistics, in 2013 community colleges converted only 42% of interested applicants into enrolled students.³⁰

Thinking Big

Finally, it’s sometimes all about scale, as Jobs for the Future explained in its “Thinking Big” research on community colleges. Here we are introduced to the notion that “our nation has great success generating innovative programs that improve outcomes for participants – but that we are far less effective at moving from small, ‘boutique’ programs into broadly applied solutions that improve the prospects for large numbers of individuals.” The paper then goes into tackling the question of scale and further developing its thinking “by examining efforts designed to spread, across entire state community college systems, evidence-based innovations that improve outcomes for students.”



To begin with, the paper presents “Four Examples of Scaling up Community College Reform” as follows:

1. The Arkansas Career Pathways Initiative includes 22 community colleges that combined have had 27,000 student participants, resulting in 24,000 certificates and degrees awarded.
2. The Oregon Career Pathways Initiative scaled up to 17 community colleges in the state with students completing 5,000 short-term certificates since 2008.

3. The Virginia Community College redesign of developmental education at 23 colleges that enroll more than 280,000 students total.
4. The Integrated Basic Education and Skills Training (I-BEST) acceleration program at 34 colleges with 163 programs and more than 3,000 students participating annually.

The Arkansas Career Pathways Initiative (CPI) is a stellar example, for instance, of how one state's community colleges and technical centers collaborated to provide higher education to students at poverty level, many of whom must first take remedial courses or earn a GED. Since 2005, CPI has enrolled 30,000 students who were mostly single, unemployed mothers in their early 30s who were on food stamps or Medicaid. "An amazing 51 percent have since graduated from college with an associate degree or technical certificate, more than twice the rate of their community college peers who did not participate in CPI."³¹

Offering strong support for necessary collaborations in order to implement so-called "Big Thinking," the authors explained that

Large-scale innovations invariably require engagement across systems – K-12 and higher education; workforce and economic development; community-based supports and college-based academics. Large-scale problems do not respect system boundaries; effective solutions often engage multiple agencies and cross structural and cultural barriers. Because of this, planning for scale requires careful attention to communication and buy-in strategies and to the building of strong, motivated partnerships, collaborations, and relationships across institutions and systems.³²

Community colleges continue to have the wherewithal to succeed at getting students through to completion and jobs, and, in the process, maintain solid enrollment numbers. Going back to 1995 with the publication of "The Company We Keep" by the American Association of Community Colleges, the message has always been that "collaboration has proven to be a far more effective approach than mutually exclusive competition in promoting the mission and overall ideals of community colleges."³³ In short, institutions cannot succeed by operating in silos or only within small pockets of innovation. The requisite collaborations with outside entities are what ultimately bring about innovative and successful solutions that keep the doors open at our nation's community colleges for any student, young, old and in-between, to pursue and thrive.

INTERVIEWEES

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The Roueche Graduate Center at National American University offers a Doctor of Education (Ed.D.) in Community College Leadership that is designed for senior administrators, faculty, and other aspiring leaders who opt for a doctorate to be well prepared for leadership positions in community and technical colleges. Instruction and engagement include a combination of face-to-face and online sessions with community college experts, teleconferencing with national leaders, team work and interaction with fellow students, topical webinars, and a practicum to address emerging college/district/system issues. For more information, please visit <http://cclp.national.edu/>.

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