Beyond Completion: Aligning Pathways to Successful Transfer & Good Jobs

Josh Wyner, Executive Director
The Aspen Institute College Excellence Program
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The Aspen Institute’s College Excellence Program aims to advance higher education practices, policies, and leadership in ways that help institutions of higher education make the choices that matter most to improving student outcomes in four areas:
Why does community college student success matter so much for communities and the nation?
Why does community college student success matter so much for our communities and the nation?

Individual Social Mobility

Talent Development

Healthy communities, regions, states, and nation
Why does community college student success matter so much for our communities and the nation? 

...because too many children are living in poverty

Percent people below poverty by race/ethnicity and age: New York, Under 5, 100%, 2015

- All: 24.6%
- White: 16.6%
- Black: 35.9%
- Latino: 34.2%
- Asian or Pacific Islander: 21.4%
- Native American: 30.7%
- Mixed/other: 20.8%
- People of color: 31.6%

IPUMS
Why does community college student success matter so much for our communities and the nation?

...because too many adults are stranded in low-wage work

Percent working poor by race/ethnicity: New York, 200%, 2015

- All: 9.2%
- White: 5.2%
- Black: 11.5%
- Latino: 19.1%
- Asian or Pacific Islander: 13.2%
- Native American: 9.8%
- Mixed/other: 10.2%
- People of color: 15.0%

IPUMS

200% of the federal poverty level = approximately $24,000 per year
Why does community college student success matter so much for our communities and the nation?

...because postsecondary education is critical to social mobility and talent development

Unemployment rates and earnings by educational attainment, 2017

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Educational Attainment</th>
<th>Unemployment Rate (%)</th>
<th>Median Usual Weekly Earnings ($)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Doctoral degree</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>1,743</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional degree</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>1,836</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Master’s degree</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>1,401</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor’s degree</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>1,173</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Associate’s degree</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>836</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some college, no degree</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>774</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High school diploma</td>
<td>4.6</td>
<td>712</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less than a high school diploma</td>
<td>6.5</td>
<td>520</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total: 3.6%</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>All workers: $907</strong></td>
</tr>
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• How have colleges historically defined success?
• What are the implications for reform efforts to date?
• How can we deliver on the promise of social mobility and talent development?
Community College 1.0: Access

Community College 2.0: Access + Completion

Community College 3.0: Access + Completion + Post-college Success
Community College 1.0: Access

**Early 20th century:** Junior colleges providing post-secondary liberal arts education to prepare students for transfer.

**Great Depression Era:** Community colleges as workforce development agents, training semi-professionals to train industrial workers.

**Post-WWII:** GI Bill leads to expansion of community college enrollments.

**1960s-1970s:** Pell Grant program for low-income students leads to enrollment boom.
Increase over time in the number of community colleges

Total Fall Enrollment at Community Colleges, 1963-2014

Source: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Digest of Education Statistics 2015, Table 303.25; 2011, Table 199
Legacy of Community College 1.0: Access

- Increased course and program offerings to meet the increased demand associated with expanded enrollment.
- Increased developmental education needs due to more underprepared students.
- Young leaders moved into president and provost positions.
## Community College 2.0: Access + Completion

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Legacy #1</th>
<th>Large number of underprepared students enrolling in community colleges.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reform</td>
<td>Improve developmental education outcomes through acceleration, contextualization, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outcome</td>
<td>Higher rates of students completing developmental sequence, but lack of improvement in overall completion rates and little to no improvement in race and income-based equity gaps.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Community College 2.0: Access + Completion

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Legacy #2</th>
<th>Large number of programs and courses offered at community colleges.</th>
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</table>
| Reform    | Guided pathways:  
|           | • Clear course sequences & other learning per degree  
|           | • Reorganizing advising to get students on & through pathways |
| Early results | Leaders must take on institution-wide reform rather than a series of independent initiatives, new kinds of leadership are needed. |
Completion is not enough.

- Students don’t aim to complete.
- Not all degrees are created equal.
- Some degrees don’t have independent value.
- Inequities persist at program level.
Community College 3.0: Access + Completion + Post-College Success
Community College 3.0: Access + Completion + Post-College Success

• Build clear guided pathways aligned to post-graduation success in transfer and work.
• Examine data on post-completion outcomes.
• Align student learning and advising systems (including program choice & financial aid) to transfer and work goals.
Community College 3.0: Access + Completion + Post-College Success

- Engage four-year universities to improve transfer and bachelor’s attainment.
- Engage employers in defining common goals for talent development.
- Engage CBOs in delivering non-academic supports.
Where do your college’s pathways lead?
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...to transfer and a bachelor’s degree?

...to employment with family-sustaining wages?
Where do your college’s pathways lead?

...to transfer and a bachelor’s degree?

...to employment with family-sustaining wages?
The vast majority of students who enroll in a community college plan to one day earn a bachelor’s degree.

Most never make it.
1.7 Million
new students enroll in a community college each year

80%
plan to get a bachelor’s degree or higher
We tracked **720,000** community college students who started in the fall of 2007 in pursuit of a college credential.

Only **100,000** earned a bachelor’s after 6 years.
Transfer Students Struggle to Earn a Bachelor’s Degree

- **80%** of new community college students aim to earn a bachelor’s.
- **33%** of these students transfer to a 4-year college within 6 years.
- **14%** earn a bachelor’s within 6 years of starting college.

For more information, see Tracking Transfer: New Measures of Institutional and State Effectiveness in Helping Community College Students Attain Bachelor's Degrees (New York, NY: Community College Research Center).
Transfer-Out Rates

New York: 37%

Transfer-With-Award Rates

New York: 36%

Transfer-Out Bachelor’s Completion Rates

New York: 40%
Community College Cohort Bachelor's Completion Rates by State

New York: 15%
Community College Cohort Bachelor's Completion Rates, by Student Income

New York: Lower income 11.3%, Higher income 15.6%

- Lower income students
- Higher income students
Just 58% of students can successfully transfer 90% of their credits.

And 15% can’t transfer any credits at all.

Even when credits do transfer, they often don’t count toward a major.

On average, students lose 43% of credits when they transfer.*

http://www.gao.gov/products/GAO-17-574
“The increasing stratification of higher education makes transfer the most important—and perhaps the only—viable avenue [to postsecondary success] for students from underserved groups.”

2012 Report from the College Board’s Commission on Transfer Policy and Practice
Even when students are able to transfer credits, those credits often don’t count toward their major.
These are the bachelor’s completion rates for transfer students, by individual community college.

There’s a lot of variation.
While outcomes at community colleges vary, what we might imagine would predict variation doesn’t.
On the other hand, the characteristics of 4-year schools matter when it comes to how many transfer students get a bachelor’s.
Where do your college’s pathways lead?

...to transfer and a bachelor’s degree?

...to employment with family-sustaining wages?
Where do your pathways lead?

• Who are your transfer partners?

• How many students from your college transfer to each of your partner institutions each year?

• What do they major in?
Where do your pathways lead?

- Who are your transfer partners?
- What are student outcomes like at your partner institutions?

- What are the overall four-year graduation rates at each college?
- What are the graduation rates for your students who transfer there?
Where do your pathways lead?

- Who are your transfer partners?
- What are student outcomes like at your partner institutions?
- Which courses transfer in each major at common transfer destinations?

- Make sure you have transfer maps through 4-year completion.
- Use maps to determine which courses transfer for credit in the major.
- Ensure that conversations will continue beyond the initial mapping.
Where do your pathways lead?

- Who are your transfer partners?
- What are student outcomes like at your partner institutions?
- Which courses transfer in each major at common transfer destinations?
- Do you know when the major requirements change at your four-year partner institutions?

- Develop annual systems for updating program maps in partnership with the four-year institutions.
Is your advising aligned to transfer?

- When are your students deciding on a meta-major and transfer destination?

Students need to decide in the first year to ensure effective pathways.
Students need to have a plan for bachelor’s attainment that includes financial aid considerations.

• When are your students deciding on a meta-major and transfer destination?
• Do students have a four-year plan?
Is your advising aligned to transfer?

- When are your students deciding on a meta-major and transfer destination?
- Do students have a four-year plan?
- Do you know when students are off-track?

Degree audit process should be tailored to transfer maps.
Is your advising aligned to transfer?

- When are your students deciding on a meta-major and transfer destination?
- Do students have a four-year plan?
- Do you know when students are off-track?
- Are your advisers connected to the advisers at the four-year school?

Create common goals and opportunities to communicate about what is working and what is not.
Leaders worked with the University of Central Florida to develop a program that guarantees university admission to Valencia graduates, locate a facility on Valencia’s main campus, and ensure that transfer is seamless for students.

**Result:** UCF enrolls thousands of Valencia transfers who succeed at rates nearly identical to students who start at UCF, and are twice as diverse.
Where do your college’s pathways lead?

...to transfer and a bachelor’s degree?

...to employment with family-sustaining wages?
Higher Education Is Key to Economic Mobility

A Rising Bar for Entry into the Middle Class That Many Are Unprepared to Meet

1970s

70% of American workers had a high school education or less

More than 50% of these workers earned middle-class wages

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2015

55% of “good jobs” required more than a high school degree

Only 42% of Americans have a college credential

Higher Education Is Key to Economic Mobility

Some Community College Credentials Offer Paths To Good Jobs...

30M Good Jobs that Require More Than HS Diploma, Less than BA

$55K Average Earnings for These Technical Jobs

Between 2014-2024, 48% of job openings will be middle skill

Higher Education CAN BE Key to Economic Mobility

Some Community College Credentials Offer Paths To Good Jobs...but Others Don’t

Over half of all workers without a BA are not employed in jobs with family sustaining wages ($35k or higher per year).

Higher Education CAN BE Key to Economic Mobility

Who Has Been Left Out of the Job Market?

**Under- and Unemployed:**
Approximately 27 million adults 24 – 66 who are not working or in school, including “discouraged workers” who would like a job but have stopped looking.

**Opportunity Youth:**
Approximately 5-7 million young adults ages 16-24 who are not working or in school.
Community Colleges Are Keys to Talent Development and Economic Mobility

• 44% of low-income students start at community colleges
• About **50%** of students from under-represented minorities start at community colleges
• 30% of first-generation students start at community colleges
• 45% of all undergraduates are enrolled in community colleges
Community Colleges Can Drive Talent Development and Economic Mobility

...Creating Impact That Reverberates Across Communities for Generations

$3,000 17%

A $3,000 difference in parents’ income when their child is young is associated with a 17 percent increase in the child’s future earnings. A relatively small increase in household income can have a significant, lasting positive impact on the life of a child. (Aspen Ascend, 2-Gen Strategy)

Civic Engagement: College Graduates...

...Are 1.7X more likely to vote
...Volunteer 2.3X more
...Are involved in community 2.6X more
What steps can colleges take to improve students’ workforce outcomes?

- Align pathways to good jobs.
- Know data on current job outcomes for graduates and labor market projections over coming years (including bachelor’s degrees).
- Examine disparities in who gets access to what.
- Prioritize certain CTE pathways for mapping and advising.
What steps can colleges take to improve students’ workforce outcomes?

- Align pathways to good jobs.
- Develop strong partnerships.

- Root partnerships in mutual benefit and clear goals.
- Respond quickly to needs by creating/modifying pathways (which creates trust).
- Establish customer friendly practices.
What steps can colleges take to improve students’ workforce outcomes?

- Align pathways to good jobs.
- Develop strong partnerships.
- Strengthen internal practices.

- Develop strong processes for aligning program approval to good jobs and needed skills.
- Enroll diverse students in high value programs.
- Ensure students are learning.
- Review programs regularly with everyone at the table.
Pathways can provide great value to students.
Lake Area Technical Institute

The college brings industry representatives into the classroom to advise students and instructors. The college has also built structural linkages to area businesses, which help develop curriculum, fund programs and scholarships, and help recruit students to the college.

Result: Strong employment and earnings outcomes for graduates; 76 percent graduation rate.
Walla Walla Community College

Walla Walla ties its workforce credentials, general education degrees, and its assets to specific community needs, building programs that ensure that the college effectively serves multiple elements of the community.

Result: Deep community support and ever-expanding opportunity for a diverse student population and the region at large.
Questions?
Thank you!

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