

# CCRC Currents

COMMUNITY COLLEGE RESEARCH CENTER

## DIRECTOR'S COLUMN

THOMAS R. BAILEY



Although they enroll more than half of all students registered in credit-bearing courses at colleges and universities, community colleges have been the hidden institutions of American higher education. Community colleges struggle with the same troubling issues as do other postsecondary institutions, such as escalating costs and restricted revenues. But they miss out on the positive publicity from high-profile sports teams, frequently interviewed experts, and expectations surrounding research and development that baccalaureate institutions enjoy. Few people praise or even understand the value of the associate degree or the role that community colleges play within the overall landscape of higher education.

Since 1996, the Community College Research Center (CCRC), with a generous grant from the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation, has been conducting and publicizing its own research on community colleges, recruiting scholars to turn their attention to this sector, and encouraging foundations and other funders to provide resources for further study and program development. We are pleased to report now that community college research has expanded significantly over the past five years. Sessions devoted to community colleges have increased dramatically at the professional meetings of the American Educational Research Association (AERA) and the American Society for Higher Education (ASHE). There are also more research-oriented workshops at community college meetings, such as those organized

by the American Association of Community Colleges (AACC) and the League for Innovation in the Community College. A growing list of foundations has put community colleges explicitly on their agendas, and meetings to plan community college research agendas organized by foundations are increasingly common. At the federal level, interest in postsecondary occupational education, which is anchored in community colleges, has also grown, a change from the traditional focus of federal vocational education policy on high schools.

Yet a great deal remains to be done. Incipient efforts need to be tracked and evaluated, and many questions about these complex institutions are still not answered. CCRC works with community colleges, professional organizations, foundations, and government agencies to promote discussion about community colleges

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and to carry out and disseminate research. In the past year, CCRC has increased its collaboration with the AACC, and we are developing joint projects on nursing education. We also work on research projects with individual colleges, and participate in the AACC and League for Innovation conventions, organizing several workshops and presentations at each of those events.

Research remains the foundation of our work. CCRC has completed a two-year study with the National Center for Postsecondary Improvement (NCPI), funded by the Office of Educational Research and Improvement of the U.S. Department of Education, to develop a better understanding of how for-profit and public two-year colleges compare with respect to their students and their programs.

CCRC is also working with the U.S. Department of Education on the National Assessment of Vocational Education (NAVE) to conduct extensive quantitative research on the characteristics of postsecondary occupational students and their educational and economic outcomes.

In collaboration with the New School University and with the assistance of the Office of Institutional Research and Analysis of the City University of New York, CCRC examined the experience of immigrants and native minorities in CUNY during the 1990s.

With funding from the National Science Foundation (NSF), CCRC researchers have been examining the impact and sustainability of Advanced Technology Education (ATE) programs, which were designed to expand the pool of skilled technicians in the advanced technology fields. The ATE initiative is an important indication of the federal government's increasing interest in community colleges.

In addition to these collaborative projects, CCRC is using funding from the Sloan Foundation to conduct research on a wide variety of community college topics. Many of these projects are part of our National Field Study, based on data collected from intensive fieldwork at 16 community colleges in seven states. Mapping the changing landscape of community college education, we have been examining the

multiple missions of community colleges, remediation and academic preparedness, connections between the high school and community college, certification and standards, distance learning, accountability, and guidance and counseling.

In the following pages, we describe some of the projects mentioned above. Reports on our completed work can be downloaded from our website. And, as always, we welcome any questions, comments, or suggestions.

## ***FOR-PROFIT HIGHER EDUCATION AND COMMUNITY COLLEGES***

### ***THE PROJECT***

During the last five years, the growth of high-profile for-profit colleges has attracted widespread attention. Despite this attention, surprisingly little concrete information exists about for-profits. To gain greater understanding of this phenomenon, CCRC joined with the National Center for Postsecondary Improvement (NCPI), funded by the Office of Educational Research and Improvement of the U.S. Department of Education, to conduct a two-year study. The research was conducted by Thomas Bailey, CCRC's Director; Patricia Gumport, Director of the NCPI; and Norena Badway, a CCRC Senior Research Associate and Director of the Community College Cooperative.

The study first used national data to compare for-profits, private non-profits, and public postsecondary institutions. Researchers then used case studies to compare a high-quality for-profit chain—given the pseudonym Tech College—to three public community colleges located near branches of the chain.

### ***FINDINGS***

Overall, the study identified two significant trends. First, the quality of for-profit higher education has improved over the last decade. Second, some of the differences between for-profits and public community colleges have faded. Nonetheless, researchers found the following distinctions between Tech College and

the comparison public community colleges:

- *Differences in goals and missions were the most important distinction.* Tech College's mission is to prepare students for careers in a limited number of technical areas. In contrast, career preparation is only one among many functions and objectives of community colleges.
- *The curriculum development process at Tech College is centralized.* At community colleges, departments and individual faculty members have much more responsibility for program and course development.
- *Degrees are given much greater emphasis at Tech College than at community colleges.*
- *Student services such as admissions, counseling, and career placement are more integrated and better developed at Tech College.*
- *Tech College is much more focused on student employment outcomes,* paying special attention to tracking post-graduate jobs and earnings.

Other principal findings:

*The Competitive Threat.* In some areas, for-profits compete with community colleges for the same pool of students. But for-profit institutions enrolled less than five percent of students in two-year schools. One reason for this is that the for-profits are thousands of dollars more expensive than community colleges. Another explanation is their more focused strategy and concentration in a small number of fields. Since many community college students are undecided about what they want to do, they want an institution that offers a variety of programs for sampling.

*Convenience and Responsiveness.* Tech College emphasizes convenience, accelerated completion, and coordinated student services. Unlike the more haphazard process at community colleges, admissions, financial aid, assessment, advisement, and registration are closely linked. The much more comprehensive mission of community colleges and their complex array of programs and services make it difficult to develop a flexible and streamlined program of student services.

*Educational Quality.* The more focused strategy of Tech College and other for-profits is most appropriate for students who have chosen a career in one of the technical fields offered at Tech. But if "education" means providing an environment in which undecided students can explore a variety of fields, then community colleges provide a more attractive curriculum.

Tech College is committed to an applied pedagogy, offering hands-on learning in labs in every technical course and even in some of the academic courses. Nonetheless, their classrooms are not distinguishable from those at neighboring community colleges. The classroom teaching that CCRC researchers observed at Tech College was characterized by lectures with limited discussion based on questions and answers: the "chalk and talk" method.

### CONCLUSIONS

Rather than regarding for-profits as a threat, community college personnel might study them for insights within the context of their own comprehensive missions. One approach might be to create more focused programs within a particular community college, with courses, professors, and student services dedicated to that program. Public community colleges need to improve the coordination of student services, counseling, and institutional research. Community colleges could also follow the example of Tech College in better tracking and analyzing the post-graduate (and post-enrollment) activities of their students.

Researchers should study the potential for collaboration between the two types of institutions; if the two are complementary, new pathways could be created for students to reach their academic and career goals. Educators would benefit from understanding how students can best take advantage of the full range of resources provided by community colleges and their for-profit counterparts.

The full report of this project is available on the NCPI website: (<http://www.stanford.edu/group/ncpi/documents/pdfs/forprofitandcc.pdf>).

## **ASSESSMENT OF THE PARTICIPATION AND OUTCOME PATTERNS IN POSTSECONDARY OCCUPATIONAL EDUCATION**

In April 2000, CCRC was awarded a two-year contract from the U.S. Department of Education to assess emerging trends in postsecondary occupational education. This study is being conducted by CCRC Director Thomas Bailey; Marc Scott, Assistant Professor of Educational Statistics at New York University; Dave Marcotte, Assistant Professor in the Policy Sciences Graduate Program at the University of Maryland Baltimore County; Monnie McGee, Assistant Professor, Department of Mathematics and Statistics at Hunter College; and CCRC Research Associates and Assistants, Gregory S. Kienzl, Timothy Leinbach, Benjamin Kennedy, Mariana Alfonso, and Tia Dole.

The descriptive portion of the study is completed and selected findings are:

In 1996, over 60 percent of undergraduates in higher education participated in subbaccalaureate education. Over 77 percent of subbaccalaureates were enrolled part-time, and a majority (58 percent) were female.

Over one-third of subbaccalaureate students were 30 years and older. These students were more likely to enroll to obtain job skills (45 percent) than to earn a degree (24 percent) or to transfer elsewhere (less than 13 percent). Among younger students, nearly 45 percent intended to transfer to a four-year institution.

The majority of subbaccalaureate students (56 percent) were in an occupational program of study.

Two-thirds of subbaccalaureates pursued an associate degree, while 20 percent pursued a certificate. Over three-quarters of subbaccalaureate students working toward a certificate were in an occupational program of study.

A majority of subbaccalaureate students who had already obtained a degree returned for some form of occupational training—primarily to take courses, rather than for a specific program.

Upcoming newsletters will discuss findings from our examination of education pathways

and whether certain pathways improve academic outcomes.

## **THE PERFORMANCE, GRADUATION AND TRANSFER OF IMMIGRANTS AND NATIVES IN CITY UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK COMMUNITY COLLEGES**

From 1990 to 1997, the percentage of foreign-born students enrolled in the City University of New York (CUNY) grew from 33 percent to 48 percent. CCRC Director Thomas Bailey and Elliot Weininger of the CUNY Graduate Center studied the academic experience of immigrants and native minorities in CUNY's community colleges and two-year associate degree programs. They analyzed student outcome variables including: number of credits earned; transfer rate to a four-year institution; and attainment of an associate degree.

Immigrants earn more credits and are more likely to complete an associate degree. The underlying educational preparation of many immigrants is considerably better than the CUNY assessments suggest, although it may be masked by deficient language skills. Experience in the community colleges gives the foreign born a chance to strengthen their previously developed skills.

The differentiation of roles of the two- and four-year programs is controversial at CUNY. To raise the standards of four-year schools, the 1999 Report of the Mayor's Task Force on the City University of New York called for a significant reduction in remediation at CUNY's four-year colleges. In principle, henceforth all students in need of remediation—except primarily those categorized as English as a Second Language (ESL) students—would receive it at CUNY's two-year schools.

The two-year programs already enroll a disproportionate number of students with low assessment scores. Even though many of the foreign-born students in the four-year schools do not pass the assessment tests, their deficiencies are most pronounced on the reading tests. Since many of them are ESL students and therefore exempt from the new policy, researchers do not expect to see a significant shift in immigrant students from the four-year to the two-year programs.

However, since Hispanics and African Americans are already concentrated in community colleges, it seems likely that the 1999 remediation policy will actually increase the concentration of native-born African Americans and Hispanics in the community colleges.

The growing immigrant population creates more pressure on services designed to strengthen language skills and provide developmental education—already a core activity of urban public universities and community colleges. Efforts needed to adjust to the rapid increase in the immigrant enrollments should not divert attention from the continued educational problems faced by many native groups.

The report, *Performance, Graduation, and Transfer of Immigrants and Natives in City University of New York Community Colleges*, is available from CCRC.

***The following are preliminary findings of selected projects from the ongoing National Field Study funded by the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation.***

### **REMEDICATION AND ACADEMIC PREPAREDNESS**

As four-year colleges become less willing to enroll students with pre-college skills, community colleges take on a larger remediation role. CCRC Senior Research Associate Dolores Perin and Research Fellow Kerry Charron are investigating persistence rates and academic outcomes for students who take developmental education courses, compared to those at similar reading, writing, and math levels who move immediately to college-level study.

In some institutions, students are not required to undergo academic assessment; in others, even those with poor skills are not required to attend remediation prior to enrolling in college-level courses. The lack of a strong policy regarding testing and placement allows under-prepared students to take college-level courses, with the result that instructors reduce standards to accommodate the low skills level of their students. A requirement to enroll in remedial courses may, however, discourage students

and cause them to drop out, so an advantage of not mandating remedial placement is that students may be more likely to persist if they are permitted immediately to take the subject-matter courses that interest them.

Some colleges have created an alternative way of providing remediation—academic “learning centers” that provide group tutoring to support the completion of subject-matter course assignments. Although the objective is to help with specific course work, many students appear to learn the same reading, writing, and math skills that they would be taught in a remedial course. Researchers are continuing to analyze data, with the goal of determining the relative effectiveness of these different approaches.

### **EDUCATION AT A DISTANCE: COMMUNITY COLLEGE APPROACHES TO ONLINE EDUCATION**

Community colleges are a major force in the distance-education market. In 1998, students at public, two-year colleges comprised more than half of the total enrollments in postsecondary, credit-granting distance-learning courses. However, little is known about the factors motivating college and faculty participation, the organizational and administrative structures employed, or colleges’ mechanisms for assessing the success of these programs. CCRC has undertaken a study of online education to elicit this information. The principal researcher is Rebecca Cox, a doctoral student at the University of California, Berkeley.

Most colleges are in the early stages of offering web-based courses. Even colleges with long-established distance-education programs have introduced online courses slowly, adding online components to existing courses before developing entirely web-based classes. Although administrators assert that online offerings have the potential to increase working adults’ access to college, they recognize that online education is not appropriate for all students. Even when colleges provide extra support for students in online courses, the attrition rate is higher than that of comparable classroom-based courses. The colleges have not yet systematically investigated students’ reasons for dropping online courses.

### **PERFORMANCE ACCOUNTABILITY AND COMMUNITY COLLEGES: FORMS, IMPACTS, AND PROBLEMS**

Market forces are increasingly shaping higher education. A notable example is the growing use of performance accountability (PA)—distribution of public funding based on output measures such as retention, graduation, and job placement rates, rather than input variables such as enrollments.

CCRC, led by Senior Research Associate Kevin Dougherty and Research Fellow Jennifer Kim, is examining the impacts of PA systems in three areas: *immediate* impacts such as changes in the funding community colleges receive from the federal or state governments; *mediated* impacts in the form of changes community colleges make to increase their funding or at least avoid losses; and *major difficulties* community colleges encounter in addressing PA.

Halfway through the project, researchers see little evidence of huge financial impacts, positive or negative. However, PA has had a significant mediated impact on college operations. To meet reporting requirements, community colleges have developed more complex data systems, resulting in a greater capacity for self-monitoring and planning. To increase student retention and graduation rates, community colleges have made curriculum and instruction changes. They have eliminated programs with low retention and graduation rates and have expanded their efforts to enroll high school graduates better able to meet the demands of college. But some community colleges have simply moved programs with low graduation rates into the non-degree column where they are not subject to accountability requirements.

Responding to accountability demands, community colleges have had to confront institutional difficulties in four areas: inadequate measures of success; unclear and unstable standards; resource problems; and compliance costs. Important community college functions such as transfer are often not matched with a corresponding performance standard. Moreover, the retention standards may not fit with the concept of the community college as an open-entry,

open-exit institution. Unclear and unstable accountability measures also cause difficulties because the monetary payoff is hard to predict, depending not only on changing standards and weights given to those standards but also on how well other colleges are performing. Moreover, PA funding does not always grow with rising enrollments, so that even with improving performance, per-capita revenues may drop. Finally, the data-reporting requirements of state and federal PA require large outlays for equipment, staff, and faculty time to collect and analyze the required data—further compounding the colleges' resource problems.

### **"GETTING INTO THE WORLD": GUIDANCE AND COUNSELING IN COMMUNITY COLLEGES**

A large number of students come to community colleges unsure of what they want to do. The presence of so many undecided students implies that the guidance and counseling activities of community colleges may be especially important to student success. However, relatively little is known about what colleges across the country do, what services they provide, and which students they do and do not serve. W. Norton Grubb, CCRC Senior Research Associate and David Gardiner Chair in Higher Education at the University of California, Berkeley is examining the full range of guidance and counseling services in community colleges across the country.

Preliminary results indicate an emphasis on "academic" counseling to provide information on the requirements for completion of programs and transfer but relatively little to help students make decisions about their occupational futures. Most colleges emphasize relatively traditional one-on-one counseling sessions, though a smaller number offer group sessions or internships intended to allow students more substantial exploration of alternatives.

The full report is available from CCRC.

## CCRC SEMINAR SERIES

To provide intellectual leadership in a collaborative forum, CCRC sponsors an ongoing seminar series. Participants—community college faculty, administrators, presidents, and academic and institutional researchers—gather to exchange ideas, present research findings, and explore new areas of study. The aim of these meetings is to create an interactive forum where participants and panelists identify key knowledge and research directions on selected topics.

Previous seminars have focused on the new roles of community colleges, remediation and academic preparedness, and dual enrollment in high school and community college. The next seminar will take place on March 22, 2002. The topic and panelists are:

***Accountability and Learning Outcomes***  
Friday, March 22, 9:00 – 12:00PM  
Faculty House, Columbia University

### Panelists:

Kevin J. Dougherty, CCRC Senior Research Associate & Associate Professor of Higher Education, Teachers College, Columbia University  
Sandra Ruppert, Researcher, Education Commission of the States and Educational Systems Research, CO  
Chui Tsang, President of San Jose City College, CA

## UPCOMING CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS

***League for Innovation in the Community College***  
March 17 – 20, 2002, Boston, MA

***Competitors or Collaborators: Community Colleges and Four-Year Institutions***  
Tuesday, March 19th, 8:00 - 9:00AM  
Salon I Room

### Panelists:

Vanessa Smith-Morest, CCRC Research Associate  
Jean Floten, President, Bellevue Community College  
Fred Gaskin, Chancellor, Maricopa Community College District

***Blurring the Lines: Community Colleges and Dual Enrollment High School Students***  
Monday, March 18th, 12:15 - 1:15PM  
New Hampshire Room

### Panelists:

Margaret Terry Orr, CCRC Senior Research Associate & Associate Professor of Education, Teachers College, Columbia University  
James Jacobs, CCRC Associate Director & Director, Center for Workforce Development and Policy, Macomb Community College

***A New System of Learning or Is The Jury Still Out: Skill Certification in the New Economy***  
Monday, March 18th, 1:30 - 2:30PM  
Maine Room

### Panelists:

James Jacobs, CCRC Associate Director & Director, Center for Workforce Development and Policy, Macomb Community College  
John Chin, Chief Academic Officer, Front Range Community College, CO  
Stuart Rosenfeld, Principal Researcher, Regional Technology Strategies

***American Educational Research Association***  
April 1-5, 2002, New Orleans, LA

***Performance Accountability and Community Colleges: Impacts and Problems***  
Wednesday, April 3rd, 10:35AM - 12:05PM  
Sheraton, Rhythms I, 2nd Floor

### Panelists:

Kevin J. Dougherty, CCRC Senior Research Associate & Associate Professor of Higher Education, Teachers College, Columbia University  
Jennifer Kim, CCRC Research Fellow

***Informational Writing: Comparison of Remedial Adult Students and Typically Developing Middle School Children***  
Wednesday, April 3rd, 12:25 - 1:05PM  
Sheraton, Armstrong Ballroom, 8th Floor

### Panelist:

Dolores Perin, CCRC Senior Research Associate & Associate Professor of Psychology and Education, Teachers College, Columbia University

***The Role of Career Goals and Family Responsibilities in the Choice of Post-Secondary Institutions***  
Thursday, April 4th, 12:25 - 1:55PM  
Le Meridien, Frontenac, 3rd floor

### Panelists:

Gretchen A. Koball, CCRC Project Assistant  
Heather L. Koball, Research Associate, The Urban Institute

**82nd Annual AACC Convention  
April 20 – 23, 2002, Seattle, WA**

***Credentials, Degrees and Labor Markets: What  
it Takes to Become a Nurse***

**Sunday, April 21st, 2002, 10:00-11:00AM  
Room 617, Conference Center**

***Panelists:***

James Jacobs, CCRC Associate Director & Director,  
Center for Workforce Development and Policy,  
Macomb Community College  
Melinda Mechur Karp, Senior Research Assistant,  
Institute on Education and the Economy (IEE)  
Sharon Bernier, Director of Nursing at Montgomery  
College and President of the National Organization  
for Associate Degree Nursing  
Art Viterito, AACC Research Associate

***Occupational Learning and Learners:  
Participation and Outcomes in Postsecondary  
Workforce Development***

**Sunday, April 21st, 2002, 2:45-3:45PM  
Room 205, Conference Center**

***Panelists:***

James Jacobs, CCRC Associate Director & Director,  
Center for Workforce Development and Policy,  
Macomb Community College  
Donald Cameron, President, Guildford Technical  
College  
James Folkening, Director, Michigan Department of  
Career Development  
Gregory Kienzl, CCRC Research Associate

***The Role of Community Colleges in the  
Advanced Technology Education Programs:  
Findings from Research Projects***

**Monday, April 22nd, 2002, 11:15-12:15PM  
Room 303, Conference Center**

***Panelists:***

James Jacobs, CCRC Associate Director & Director,  
Center for Workforce Development and Policy,  
Macomb Community College  
Elizabeth Teles, Lead Program Director of Division  
of Undergraduate Education, The National Science  
Foundation  
Yukari Matsuzuka, CCRC Research Associate  
Jack Waintraub, Executive Director, New Jersey  
Center for Advanced Technological Education  
(NJCATE)

*Please visit the*



*booth at*

***The League for Innovations in the  
Community College  
2002 Innovations Conference  
March 17-20, 2002  
Boston Marriott Copley Place***

**and**

***The 82nd Annual AACC Convention  
April 20-23, 2002  
Washington State  
Convention & Trade Center  
Seattle, WA***

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*The*



*will be hosting a reception at*

***The 82nd Annual AACC Convention  
Saturday, April 20, 2002  
8:00 pm to 11:00 pm  
Sheraton Seattle Hotel & Towers  
Hospitality Rooms 418/420  
1400 Sixth Avenue  
Seattle, WA 98101***

***We hope you will be able to attend***

Please check our website for details  
<http://www.tc.columbia.edu/ccrc/>



## PUBLICATIONS

### Journal Articles

- Bailey, T. & Averianova, I. (2001 Summer). Multiple missions of community colleges: Conflicting of complementary. *The Catalyst*, 30(2), 5-12.
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- Orr, M.T. (2001). Community colleges and their communities: Collaboration for workforce development. *New Directions for Community Colleges*, 115(3), 39-49.
- Orr, M. T. (1998). Integrating secondary schools and community colleges through school-to-work transition and educational reform. *Journal of Vocational Education Research*, 23(2), 93-113.
- Perin, D. (2001, August/September). Promising approaches for remediation. *Community College Journal*, 72(1), 53-56.
- Perin, D. (2001, April). Academic-occupational integration as a reform strategy for the community college: Classroom perspectives. *Teachers College Record* 103(2), 303-335.
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### Book Chapters

- Bailey, T. (2002). Community colleges in the 21st Century: Challenges and opportunities. In P.A. Gram and N. Stacey (Eds.), *The Knowledge Economy and Postsecondary Education: Report of a Workshop*. Washington, DC: National Academy Press.
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- Dougherty, K. (2002). Community colleges. In D. Levinson, P. Cookson, & A. Sadovnik (Eds.), *Education and Sociology: An Encyclopedia*, (pp. 99-110). New York: Routledge Falmer.
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