



2020– 2022

BIENNIAL REPORT

CCRC COMMUNITY COLLEGE
RESEARCH CENTER

TEACHERS COLLEGE, COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY

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Cover photo courtesy of Wake Technical Community College



Letter from Our Director

Dear colleague,

Over the last 18 months, we have witnessed the loss and isolation of a pandemic, the anguish of a national racial reckoning, and the tension of a bitter election. Yet, the country is opening up again, and many are now envisioning how lives and livelihoods can be made better and more fair as we return to a more connected world. And community colleges—which continue to adapt to challenging circumstances, including a precipitous drop in student enrollments—are now at the center of a national conversation on how to make college more accessible, affordable, and effective for students from all backgrounds.

Helping community college students succeed will be instrumental in helping our nation recover, heal, and grow. In the pages of this biennial report, we highlight some of the issues these students face. We also discuss how research and other activities undertaken by CCRC are aimed at improving the experience of underserved students and addressing deep-rooted inequities in higher education that have been exacerbated by the pandemic.



Thomas Brock
Director, CCRC

This year also marks the center's 25th anniversary. Since 1996, CCRC has conducted research on community colleges that has had considerable influence on policy and practice. For example, CCRC has long been at the forefront of developmental education research showing that few students who enroll in traditional developmental coursework ever advance to college-level courses. This work led to substantial changes in how underprepared students are assessed and taught in college. And CCRC's 2015 book, *Redesigning America's Community Colleges*—based on more than a decade of research—argued that to increase degree completion, colleges must be fundamentally reorganized to provide better pathways for students. To date, approximately 400 campuses in 17 states are undertaking guided pathways reforms as part of formal, multi-college initiatives, and over this past summer, CCRC held its first institute to help practitioners at rural colleges launch large-scale reform efforts.

CCRC's influence and ongoing success would not be possible without the support of our funders and the collaboration of colleges, state agencies, and other organizations with whom we conduct our research. Along with these partners, we enter the next phase of our work aware of both the challenges community colleges currently face and the enormous opportunity they provide for millions of students each year.

Sincerely,



Thomas Brock
October 2021

Why We Study Community Colleges

Community colleges have the potential to dramatically improve educational equity and social mobility in the United States. They provide programs and services to large numbers of racially minoritized, low-income, immigrant, and first-generation students who want to earn credentials that lead to family-sustaining careers. But while they play an essential role in higher education and workforce development, community colleges operate with far fewer resources than their four-year counterparts, and their completion rates tend to be lower. CCRC carries out research to help community colleges strengthen opportunities and improve outcomes for their students, particularly those from underserved populations.

DEFINED IN THE DATA

While federal data defines *public two-year colleges* as about 850 colleges that offer associate degrees but not bachelor's degrees, states use a wider definition of *community colleges* that includes another 100 or so institutions that primarily offer associate degrees but also offer some bachelor's degrees in limited fields.



Who are community college students?

- Community colleges serve nearly 10 million students per year (using the state definition), more than 40% of all undergraduates, though their enrollments fell precipitously during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- About 40% of students enrolled in public two-year colleges are Black or Hispanic, compared with 30% of students enrolled in all four-year colleges.
- Nearly 60% of public two-year college students are financially independent. About 37% come from households earning less than \$20,000 per year.
- In 2020-21, the average published tuition and fees for a full-time student at public two-year institutions nationally was \$3,770, compared with \$10,560 at public four-year colleges.

What are their academic and labor market outcomes?

- About 40% of public two-year students earn a credential from a two- or four-year institution within six years. The rate for public four-year college students is 67%.
- About 80% of entering community college students indicate they want to earn a bachelor's degree or higher, but only about a third transfer to a four-year institution within six years.
- The median earnings of associate degree holders aged 25 and older who work full-time are 20% higher than those of workers with only a high school diploma.

Photo courtesy of Wake Technical Community College

Voices from the Field

“ CCRC is where my staff and I turn to first when we engage in any strategic thinking and action. There is no topic in community college thought leadership that CCRC’s research has not influenced. For an in-depth understanding and national insight about what is happening to and through community colleges, simply put, CCRC’s research is the gold standard.”

– Michael Baston
President, Rockland Community College



“ Throughout the United States, hundreds of thousands of students have been the beneficiaries of college campuses that have learned from CCRC’s case studies of success, proving that institutional transformation was not only possible but could be scaled to impact more students, especially those most minoritized by failed systems.”

– Yolanda Watson Spiva
President, Complete College America



“ The Ohio Success Center’s partnership with the Community College Research Center has informed and elevated our collective work to scale guided pathways across the 23 community colleges in the state. It has been a tremendous asset to our work to have this opportunity to learn together and support the colleges in their efforts to better serve students.”

– Laura Rittner
Executive Director, Success Center for Ohio Community Colleges



“ CCRC’s research has had a major impact on California community colleges’ students. Specifically, the research on standardized testing and multiple measures placement models has shaped reform efforts in California that have eliminated the use of standardized placement exams and significantly altered the use of remedial education in math and English.”

– Eloy Ortiz Oakley
Chancellor, California Community Colleges

Quick Stats

2020-21

24

Publications

39

Blog posts

84

Press mentions

100+

Presentations

41,798

Downloads

13.6K

Twitter
followers

6.7K

LinkedIn
followers

6.5K

Newsletter
subscribers

6.2K

Monthly FAQ
page views

8.2K

Monthly blog
views

70.4K

Monthly website
page views

Engaging with the Field

Because CCRC's research is designed to be useful for colleges, we talk regularly with college leaders, advocates, policymakers, and others to ensure we understand their challenges and questions. The COVID-19 pandemic changed the ways we kept in touch, with video meetings and webinars taking the place of in-person site visits and conference presentations. But it did not stand in the way of new types of engagement with the field, including CCRC's first guided pathways summer institute.



“ I learned to value strong foundations in professional relationships. It felt easy to connect and engage remotely with those I had previously built positive relationships with in person.”

– Veronica Minaya
Senior Research Associate, CCRC

“ When presenting and engaging with folks via Zoom (aka shouting into the virtual void from a corner in my bedroom), I realized that if I'm not having fun with it, they're probably not.”

– John Fink
Senior Research Associate, CCRC



“ In some ways, the option of Zoom enabled us more 'face time' with our college partners than we would normally have gotten. But the biggest challenge has been that advancing research was, appropriately, a lower priority for partner institutions and agencies managing so many other more pressing needs during the pandemic.”

– Judith Scott-Clayton
Senior Research Scholar, CCRC



COVID Blog Series

Throughout the pandemic, community college educators have been hungry for information about what COVID-19 means for their colleges and their students. Our COVID blog posts touched on issues from enrollment to advising and were read by more than 15,000 website visitors.

Will Students Be Prepared for Community College Post-Pandemic?

This post looks at how the disruptions caused by the pandemic have affected high school students who are likely to enroll in community colleges. (April 29, 2021)

Community Colleges and the COVID-19 Pandemic: Which States Have Been Hardest Hit?

This post uses census data to offer a state-by-state look at how COVID-19 has disrupted students' college plans. (March 2, 2021)

Community College Graduates and the COVID-19 Pandemic

Data in this post suggests that community college graduates have had more economic success than high school graduates during the pandemic. (January 21, 2021)

Remote Data Collection: How CCRC Adapted Research Practices Amid the Pandemic

The pandemic prohibits CCRCers from conducting site visits and in-person data collection, but that doesn't mean they've stopped gathering information. Here are some of the challenges and opportunities presented by remote research. (November 24, 2020)

What Does It Mean to be a Caring Campus During the COVID-19 Pandemic?

During the pandemic, fostering a sense of campus community is all the more crucial. In this post, experts offer solutions for keeping staff and students engaged and feeling supported while everyone is remote. (June 26, 2020)

Emerging Challenges the Coronavirus Poses for Community Colleges

Community colleges across the nation are adapting to teaching and learning amid the pandemic. This essay details some of the issues they confronted early in the transition, including equitable practice and financial stability. (April 7, 2020)

CCRC's Summer Institute for Rural Colleges

At CCRC's summer institute, *Guided Pathways at Rural Colleges: Using Data to Launch Large-Scale Reform*, 21 college teams joined CCRC researchers and other experts to kickstart their guided pathways planning. Over two-week virtual sessions in June and July 2021, the colleges examined data on their students' program choices, reimagined student onboarding, and honed a message to take back to their campuses about why they should engage in this work.

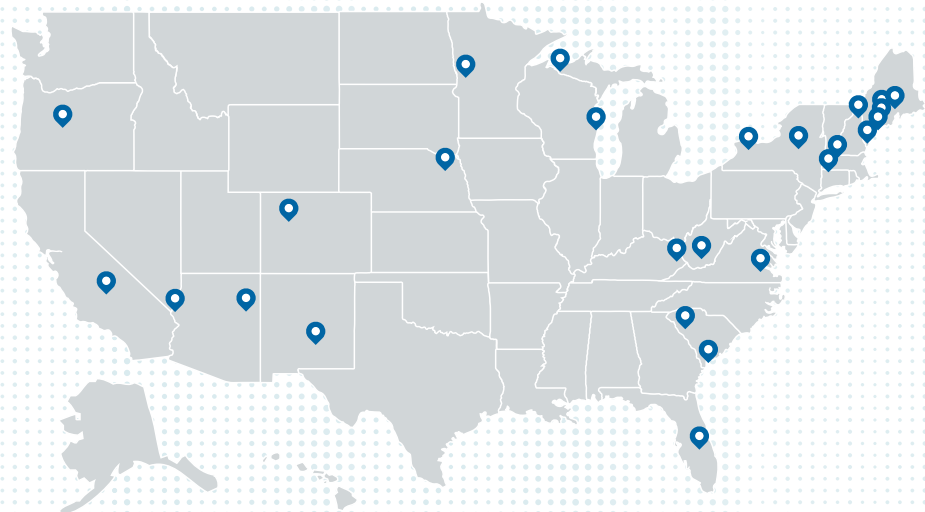
"We came away from it very excited and energized about what guided pathways reforms mean for us," said Eric Earnhardt, who led the team from Richard Bland College in Virginia.

The institute provided targeted help to smaller colleges that had not participated in previous guided pathways initiatives and focused on the specific challenges rural colleges face when taking on major reforms like guided pathways. While their small size means they can be relatively flexible, they often have limited resources, and staff members are busy with multiple, overlapping roles.

"We learned so much from these colleges about the challenges facing rural and rural-serving institutions as well as the strengths of these institutions and the opportunities for reimagining the student experience," said CCRC Senior Research Associate and Program Lead Hana Lahr, who led the planning for the institute. "Rural colleges are so diverse, and there is no-one-size-fits-all approach to institutional transformation."

CCRC will hold a second institute in summer 2022. In conjunction with this project, CCRC is also creating practical, easy-to-digest materials to help colleges plan and implement guided pathways reforms.

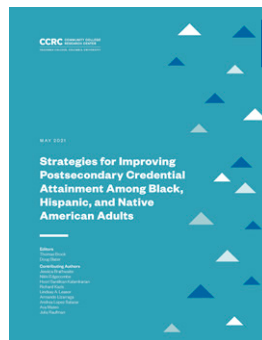
2021 PARTICIPANT LOCATIONS



Applying an Equity Lens to Our Research

Part of CCRC's mission is to call attention to innovations in education policy and practice that can counteract social disparities by race and class. This goal took on new meaning during the summer of 2020, as racialized police brutality spurred global protests and a renewed push for systemic change. CCRC was proud to stand in solidarity with Black Lives Matter and other movements to continue developing ideas around how community colleges can contribute to a more just society.

The inequities highlighted by the Black Lives Matter protests are particularly relevant to the community college sector, which educates a disproportionate number of minoritized and low-income students. Several new and ongoing CCRC projects aim to center the experiences of minoritized students and examine whether policies intended to improve outcomes and eliminate racial gaps are effective. This equity-centric work includes several projects and publications highlighted here.



Recent Publication

Strategies for Improving Postsecondary Credential Attainment Among Black, Hispanic, and Native American Adults

May 2021

CCRC published a trio of studies examining how colleges are supporting minoritized adult learners. The three studies looked at aligning short-term credentials with community college degree programs, bundling and sequencing supports, and implementing culturally sustaining practices.

English Learners in Community Colleges

This project focuses on students who are developing their English language and literacy skills. Although these students comprise a large and growing segment of the community college population, there is a dearth of research on their experiences in higher education. With this project, CCRC will illuminate potential changes to policies and practices designed to improve their academic outcomes.



Photo courtesy of Wake Technical Community College



Photo courtesy of Palm Beach State College

Funding Community Colleges Effectively

Community colleges struggle to drive social and economic mobility in part because policymakers appear unable or unwilling to provide adequate funding to improve student success. Research has established a direct link between overall spending levels and student outcomes, but community colleges—and those that serve the most disadvantaged students in particular—receive significantly less support than public four-year institutions. A new CCRC project will identify racially equitable state funding strategies based on realistic estimates of costs.



Photo courtesy of Wake Technical Community College

Designing Supports with Black, Latinx, & Low-Income Learners in Mind

We know that good advising helps students progress through college, but what works for one student may not for another. Colleges need to know more about how to effectively advise and support Black, Latinx, and low-income students. So CCRC is studying up to six Integrated Planning and Advising for Student Success (iPASS) colleges that have seen some improvements in credits attempted, credits earned, or retention among traditionally underrepresented students.

“The colleges participating in this project have all undertaken advising reforms that include using emerging technologies to strengthen student supports. But some of the colleges achieved better results with their Black, Latinx, and low-income students than others,” CCRC Senior Research Scholar Elisabeth Barnett said. “We seek to better understand what

practices, policies, and cultural changes happen in colleges that lead to more equitable outcomes.”

The students at the center of this project are from communities disproportionately harmed by COVID-19 and the resulting college closures.

“Given that some form of virtual advising and student support is likely to continue even when campuses open for in-person instruction, there is urgency to build on what we know about virtual advising by exploring advising practices that are effective at reaching racially and socioeconomically underrepresented groups,” CCRC Senior Research Associate Hoori Santikian Kalamkarian said.



Photo courtesy of the Texas Association of Community Colleges

Strengthening Dual Enrollment Programs to Boost Minority High School Student Outcomes

When the first dual enrollment programs launched more than two decades ago, many were envisioned as a way for academically advanced students to begin accumulating college credits before high school graduation. Increasingly, however, college acceleration strategies like dual enrollment are being harnessed to improve outcomes for underrepresented students—particularly low-income students and students of color. These beneficial programs have expanded dramatically over the last 20 years, but access is uneven.

“Higher education in the U.S. is highly unequal and segregated, and students of color and low-income students face systematic barriers to participation in dual enrollment programs,” Senior Research Associate Veronica Minaya said. “They do not know about the program or attend schools that don’t offer the opportunity; their parents can’t afford the tuition

fees or transportation to the college campus; or their K-12 education didn’t prepare them well enough to meet all eligibility requirements.”

A recent CCRC analysis showed that Black students participate in dual enrollment at half the rate of White students; there are similar disparities in access for Hispanic, Native American, and Pacific Islander students. This project aims to identify ways to make acceleration programs more equitable.

“Although many dual enrollment programs are currently underutilized as drivers of college access and success, the scale at which they operate presents a major opportunity for advancing equity in the high-school-to-college transition,” CCRC Senior Research Associate John Fink said. “I’m looking forward to further examining promising approaches and amplifying how educators are working to transform dual enrollment to better advance equity.”

Responding to the Pandemic

The pandemic reached into every corner of community colleges. It made it all but impossible for students to take in-person placement tests. It accelerated workplace changes and shifted employers' skill demands for community college graduates. And it forced advisors to support the most vulnerable learners through a screen.

Likewise, COVID-19 left no CCRC research area untouched and made our mission to empower practitioners and leaders with actionable information all the more urgent. Beginning in the spring of 2020, researchers adapted their work to support the field through the crisis, asking new questions, taking stock of pandemic-era strategies, and compiling valuable resources. The CCRC blog became a hub for COVID-related ideas, documenting the field's evolution in practice and contextualizing emerging trends.

Our student supports research team, for example, detailed colleges' strategies for expanding students' access to technology, connecting with learners online, and training advisors to do their work remotely. Meanwhile, CCRC's workforce team explained that access to high-quality, low-cost training will be crucial to helping the economy recover from its COVID-19 slump—and showed that the value of a community college degree held up even during the pandemic, with community college graduates less likely to lose their jobs than Americans with just a high school diploma. And the guided pathways team explored why, amid dire financial circumstances, colleges continued to invest in college-wide reforms.

Lessons Learned from Remote Data Collection

In a typical year, CCRCers blanket the United States, collecting data on site visits at colleges from coast to coast. These trips allow researchers to meet with college leaders, faculty, and students and to get a feel for the campuses that are implementing guided pathways, advising reform, corequisite developmental courses, and other programs CCRC is studying. The pandemic, of course, rendered these trips impossible—but the research continued. Here are three lessons our researchers learned as they conducted remote interviews during the pandemic.

1 It is critical to ensure that participants feel comfortable and supported during virtual interviews.

Establishing a baseline level of familiarity is an important part of qualitative data collection. When students and college personnel feel heard and respected by researchers, they are more likely to share their experiences truthfully. A virtual conversation, however, can be impersonal and distant.

"The online environment has a different flow from an in-person conversation, and you're missing out on body language," CCRC Senior Research Associate and Program Lead Susan Bickerstaff said. "You're already in an environment that's kind of sterile, and in some ways, you're losing those opportunities to build rapport with people that an in-person environment facilitates."

Researchers have been deliberate about overcoming these challenges in simple but meaningful ways. They created a remote research guide with strategies and tips for conducting interviews and focus groups, and they were intentional about creating a positive environment on video calls by arriving a few minutes early, being friendly and welcoming, and acknowledging the difficult circumstances people may be facing.

2 Researchers must consider who these virtual interviews leave out.

Even the most considerate interview practices can't account for people who don't show up at all. Gathering students for focus groups can be challenging even when everyone is on campus, and during a pandemic, they may be even less likely to participate. Speaking to fewer people not only results in less data but may also lead to data that is less representative.

"There are so many things that are challenging: parenting, any kind of caregiving responsibilities that are going on, and even just being in communities that are being ravaged by this pandemic," CCRC Senior Research Associate Lauren Pellegrino said. "What does that mean for us in terms of getting a wide range of perspectives, which is what we try to do when we're on-site?"



3 CCRC is reimagining the future of site visits.

Eliminating on-campus visits and in-person presentations has reduced CCRC's travel costs and our contributions to climate change. Virtual interviews and focus groups may prove to be a viable alternative as the center looks to implement more sustainable practices, even once it's safe to resume travel. And, in addition to the environmental benefits, the convenience of online conversations may open the door for researchers to speak to staff, students, and others who aren't always on campus or may not feel comfortable with their peers seeing them speak to researchers.

"I hope some of the changes will stick around," Pellegrino said. "It's cheaper, our carbon footprint is a lot less, and if we don't have the travel expenses associated with it, a wider range of staff can be involved in data collection activities. I think there could be studies where it makes a lot of sense."

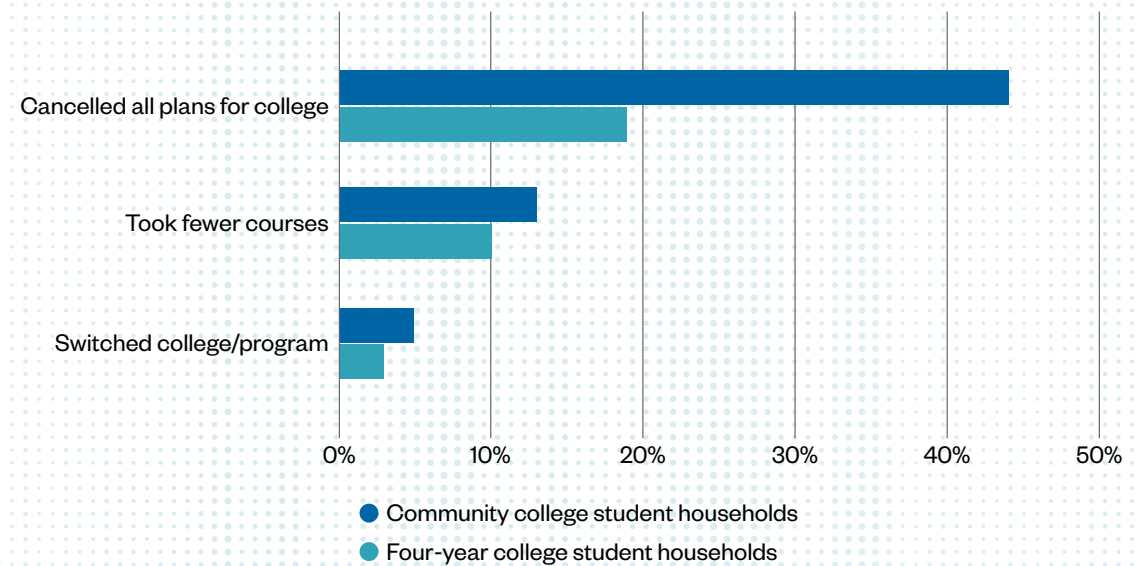


What Does COVID-19 Mean for Community College Enrollment?

Economic crises tend to be good for community college enrollments, as displaced workers turn to open-access institutions to reskill and improve their prospects on the job market. But COVID-19 has not produced a typical downturn. The virus challenged CCRC researchers as they worked to untangle its implications for community colleges. COVID-19 disproportionately affected the economic and physical health of the low-income, non-White neighborhoods that many community college students call home. As a result, enrollment tumbled by 9.5%—or 476,000 students—from spring 2020 to spring 2021. In November 2020, CCRC Director Thomas Brock and Research Affiliate Clive Belfield examined U.S. Census survey data to try to understand why enrollments were down, noting that more than half of prospective community college students cancelled their plans altogether, switched programs, or enrolled in fewer courses than they had initially planned to.

CCRCers also contributed to dozens of local and national news stories on the enrollment declines, speaking to reporters at outlets ranging from the *Houston Chronicle* and *The Palm Beach Post* to *The Wall Street Journal* and *The Chronicle of Higher Education*. As the vaccination campaign picked up speed in spring 2021, the future of community college enrollment remained murky, as did the virus' longer-term impacts on the students who disappeared from classrooms or never showed up at all.

Student Responses to Pandemic



Shaping the Future of Developmental Education

Since its launch in 2014, the Center for the Analysis of Postsecondary Readiness (CAPR) has conducted groundbreaking work to push developmental education reform forward at community colleges. The center, which CCRC co-leads with MDRC, has added to the overall consensus that the goal of developmental reforms should be to put more students into college-level courses and invest in their success in those courses.

"We have a much stronger understanding of what's more effective than traditional prerequisite developmental courses," said Nikki Edgecombe, CAPR's principal investigator. "We have a lot of new knowledge and a lot of proof points nationally around developmental education reform."

When CAPR's initial five-year grant ended, IES followed up with additional funding to explore longer-

term outcomes and equity implications in studies of assessment and placement and developmental math reforms. Other new grants from IES, Ascendium Education Group, and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation are allowing CAPR researchers to study corequisite course design, synthesize the evidence base around developmental reform, and develop strategies and tools to help colleges implement multiple measures assessment.

"We're at a really important inflection point," Edgecombe said. "We have a lot to learn about how we can tailor, direct, or shape existing reforms to support different student populations. We have a lot to learn about how to ensure access to reform is equitable. And we have a lot to learn around the ways in which institutions can better support those charged with implementing this work, whether they're in the advising office or the classroom."

Reimagining Developmental Education

CAPR \ How can we do better
2019 \ for our students?



CAPR's November 2019 conference in New York City brought together more than 300 policymakers, practitioners, students, and researchers to discuss the future of developmental education and college readiness.



CCRC Celebrates 25 Years

When Thomas Bailey founded CCRC in 1996, few researchers were studying community colleges, and data on them was limited. Today, community colleges are central to conversations about higher education and a thriving economy. For the last 25 years, CCRC research has revealed insights into how community colleges can restructure and adapt to serve their students better.

1996 A New Center at Teachers College

The Community College Research Center is founded at the suggestion of Alfred P. Sloan Foundation program officer Jesse Ausubel.



1998 Understanding the Role of Community Colleges

Initial CCRC studies focus on understanding the multiple missions of community colleges, how they function, and the role they play in workforce education and economic development.

2011 **The Effectiveness of Online Learning**
CCRC research questioning the effectiveness of online learning for disadvantaged students draws wide attention and influences policy in multiple states.

2011 **CAPSEE: Our Second IES-Sponsored Partnership**
The Center for Analysis of Postsecondary Education and Employment is established to examine the employment and earnings benefits of postsecondary degree and certificate programs.



2008 **Student Progression in Developmental Education**
A landmark CCRC study shows that fewer than half of students referred to developmental education complete the sequence of developmental courses.

2006 **NCPR: Our First IES-Sponsored Partnership**
CCRC, MDRC, and the University of Virginia establish the National Center for Postsecondary Research to study the effectiveness of programs to help students transition to college.



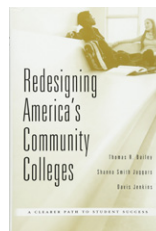
2000 **The National Field Study**
CCRC launches the National Field Study of Community Colleges. Over three years, researchers conduct case studies of 15 community colleges in six states.

2012 **Understanding Students' Developmental Needs**
CCRC studies find that placement using standardized tests alone misassigns many students to developmental education courses, leading to research on better ways to assess students' college readiness.

2014 **CAPR: Our Third IES-Sponsored Partnership**
CCRC and MDRC establish the Center for the Analysis of Postsecondary Readiness to research innovative practices in developmental education.



2015 **The Guided Pathways Model**
CCRC's book *Redesigning America's Community Colleges: A Clearer Path to Student Success* is published. It calls for broad institutional reform to improve student outcomes.



2016 **Celebrating 20 Years**
Dr. Jill Biden addresses CCRC's 20th-anniversary celebration. The then-Second Lady, a community college professor, argues that investment in the two-year college sector is essential.



Photo credit: Bruce Gilbert

2021 **Postsecondary Teaching with Technology Collaborative**
CCRC and SRI International launch a five-year, IES-funded research center to study how to enhance students' self-directed learning skills in online courses.



2021 **Launching the PEAR Fellowship**
The first of three cohorts of Postsecondary Education Applied Research (PEAR) fellows begins studying at Teachers College. The IES-funded program, led by CCRC and TC's Department of Education Policy and Social Analysis, trains the next generation of higher education researchers.



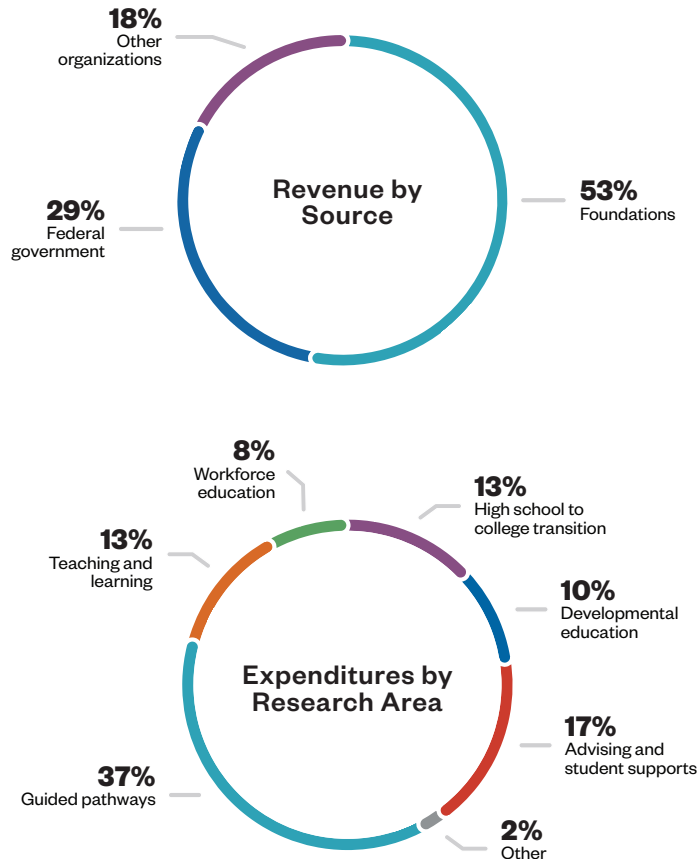
2020 **Responding to COVID-19**
CCRC pulls lessons from prior studies and conducts new research to help community colleges respond to the COVID-19 pandemic and address the challenges of remote learning and supports.

2018 **A New Era of Leadership**
Thomas Bailey is inaugurated as the 11th president of Teachers College, Columbia University, and Thomas Brock takes over as director of CCRC.



Financial Snapshot

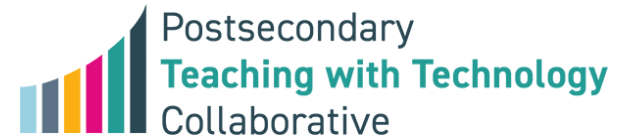
Fiscal Year 2020–21



Cumulative Total of Active Grants
\$52,304,772

Annual Budget
\$9.5 million

Major Recent Grants



July 2021

In partnership with SRI Education and Achieving the Dream, CCRC is using a \$10 million IES grant to launch a research center investigating how instructors can use technology to help students develop self-directed learning skills.

Understanding the Support Networks of First-Generation College Students

July 2021

CCRC earned IES support to study the personal support networks of first-generation college students over their first and second year.

PEAR POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION APPLIED RESEARCH FELLOWSHIP

July 2020

IES awarded CCRC and the Teachers College Department of Education Policy and Social Analysis \$3.5 million to provide doctoral students with training in advanced quantitative analysis and the practical skills needed for a career in applied research in postsecondary education.

CCRC FUNDERS

Achieving the Dream
 American Association of Community Colleges
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 Arnold Ventures
 Ascendium Education Group
 Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation
 Calbright College
 Charles A. Dana Center, University of Texas at Austin
 College Futures Foundation
 ECMC Foundation
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 Institute for Evidence-Based Change
 Jobs for the Future
 The Joyce Foundation
 J-PAL North America
 JPMorgan Chase Foundation
 The Kresge Foundation
 Lumina Foundation
 MDRC
 NASPA, Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education
 National Center for Inquiry & Improvement
 National Science Foundation
 Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Foundation
 The Research Foundation for the State University of New York
 Rockefeller Philanthropy Advisors
 Schmidt Futures
 SRI International
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 U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences
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Executive Director, Washington State Board for Community and Technical Colleges

This report was written by Hayley Glatter and Elizabeth Ganga. It was designed by Stacie Long.

CCRC studies community colleges because they provide critical access to postsecondary education and are uniquely positioned to promote equity and social mobility in the United States. Our mission is to conduct research that helps these institutions strengthen opportunities and improve outcomes for their students, particularly those from underserved populations.

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