



2022–2024 Biennial Report

Director's Letter

Dear Colleague,

CCRC studies community colleges because of their potential to advance equity and increase social mobility in the United States. We are motivated by our belief in accessible, affordable, high-quality education for every student who seeks a job that provides a living wage or who wants to transfer to a four-year college or university. In this biennial report, we describe some of the ways we are working to achieve these goals.

Community colleges were hit hard by the COVID-19 pandemic. Nationally, enrollments dropped 17% from spring 2020 to spring 2023, and many students experienced learning losses and other setbacks. Fortunately, the enrollment picture is improving, and decades of research by CCRC and others has produced a growing base of evidence on ways to improve student outcomes. These range from relatively simple changes in how students are assessed and placed into English and math courses to whole-college reforms known as guided pathways. Partly in response to the pandemic, many community colleges are adopting new technologies to improve classroom teaching and student advising. There is also growing interest at the state and national levels in adopting financing strategies to ensure that community colleges have the resources they need to help all students achieve their educational and employment goals.

A consistent theme throughout CCRC's work is partnership. We are grateful to the many community colleges, K-12 districts, universities, state agencies, national student success organizations, and other researchers who inspire us with their vision and who work with us on projects. We are also grateful to the funders who support our research and dissemination. Like the institutions we study, we strive to improve. If you have feedback on our work—what you find most useful, what we can do better, what issues or questions you would like to see us address in the future—please [let us know](#).

Sincerely,



Tom Brock

Questions We're Asking



More than ever, I am interested in the ways that institutions can better integrate humanity and empathy into their culture so that students and faculty don't feel as disconnected.

Akilah H. Thompson
Senior Research Assistant

Who Are Community College Students?

38%
are Black or Hispanic

67%
work while enrolled

67%
study part-time

43%
earn a credential within six years

32%
transfer to a four-year institution



CCRC's Impact on the Field

Guided Pathways Summer Institutes

More than 400 community colleges across the nation are part of the guided pathways whole-college reform movement, which CCRC helped catalyze through more than a decade of applied research. In 2021 and 2022, CCRC led [Guided Pathways Summer Institutes](#) involving 49 colleges in 25 states. The institutes [helped the colleges reshape](#) student onboarding and advising and build campus support for comprehensive organizational change.

Scott-Clayton and Matsudaira in the Biden Administration

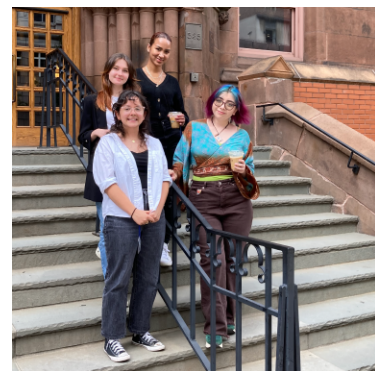
CCRC researchers and Teachers College professors Judith Scott-Clayton and Jordan Matsudaira served in the Biden administration during the 2022–23 academic year, [Scott-Clayton as a senior economist](#) in the Council of Economic Advisers and [Matsudaira as chief economist](#) in the Department of Education.

Expanding the Adoption of Multiple Measures Assessment

CCRC is a leader in understanding the effects of developmental education and improving academic support for students through evidence-based reform. Following up on [CAPR's long-term study](#) that found positive impacts from multiple measures assessment (MMA), the CAPR team is supporting [implementation and scaling](#) of MMA at 13 two- and four-year institutions in Arkansas and Texas.

Partnership and Collaboration

CCRC collaborates with intermediary organizations to strengthen community colleges and student outcomes. Achieving the Dream, for example, works with its 300 member colleges to improve students' labor market outcomes and reduce equity gaps that pervade program enrollments and completions using CCRC's [Unpacking Program Enrollments With Opportunity and Equity in Mind](#) brief and data tool.



Highlights from CCRC's Research

After the disruptions of the last few years, CCRC is gearing our research toward helping community colleges and their students look to the future.

Accelerating Pandemic Recovery in Community Colleges

In response to community college enrollment declines and learning setbacks caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, the Institute of Education Sciences created the [Accelerating Recovery in Community Colleges \(ARCC\) Research Network](#). It includes six research teams that are working with state and local community college systems across the country to evaluate a broad range of recovery strategies, with a focus on groups most affected by the pandemic at community colleges—including students of color, low-income students, first-generation students, and adult students. CCRC is leading a team that is examining the implementation and effects of Virginia's [Get a Job, Get a Skill, and Get Ahead \(G3\) initiative](#). Working with the National Student Clearinghouse Research Center and the Wheelhouse Center at UC Davis to lead the ARCC Network, CCRC is also convening Network members and leading national data collection on community college recovery. The goal of the Network is to provide timely and actionable information that colleges can use to bring students back to the classroom, accelerate their academic progress, and lay a foundation for broader improvements in community college education.



Guided Pathways to Credentials, Transfer, and Careers

In the 2015 book [Redesigning America's Community Colleges](#), CCRC researchers argued that community colleges must fundamentally redesign their programs and support services to create clearer, more educationally coherent pathways to credentials with strong labor-market value. [Guided pathways](#) gives colleges a framework for thinking about how to ensure that every student earns a certificate or degree in a reasonable amount of time and is well prepared to take their next step, whether taking a good job or transferring to a four-year college or university. Since the book's publication, CCRC has released guidance, tools, and case studies to show college decision-makers what guided pathways looks like in practice. For example, because so many students drop out early on, CCRC researchers developed the [Ask-Connect-Inspire-Plan](#) framework to help colleges improve their student onboarding practices. With hundreds of colleges working on guided pathways reforms, CCRC is studying their efforts to reach down into high schools to help dual enrollment students connect to programs at the college and up to four-year colleges to promote transfer, while also urging colleges to create better connections to the workforce.



Technology and Online Learning in Community Colleges

Community colleges must find ways to deliver effective online courses that meet students' need for flexibility while ensuring that they get a first-rate educational experience. Part of that is equipping instructors to engage students and help them manage their learning, which is the focus of the [Postsecondary Teaching with Technology Collaborative](#). A partnership between CCRC, SRI Education, and Achieving the Dream, the Collaborative focuses on the effective use of technology to help students develop self-directed learning skills. To take advantage of technology that can benefit students, instructors also need training. Working closely with researchers at the [Regional Education Laboratory \(REL\) Northwest](#), CCRC is evaluating the effects of a professional learning program designed to help instructors use technology to strengthen their teaching and enhance student learning.



Equity in Community Colleges

Community colleges serve a large number of Black and Hispanic students as well as low-income and first-generation students, making them a potential driver of equitable opportunity and outcomes in higher education. But disparities affect these students in everything from assignment to developmental education to bachelor's degree attainment for transfer students. CCRC is working to investigate and dismantle these disparities throughout our research. In one project, researchers are investigating the [support networks of first-generation students](#) at public colleges in California, including whom they turn to for help both inside and outside the college. The project will help colleges strengthen their existing support services for first-generation students and develop new approaches. Another project seeks to uncover promising practices for [improving equity in dual enrollment programs](#). High schools and colleges are building guided pathways practices into their dual enrollment programs to remove barriers for underserved students and to ensure the courses lead to high-opportunity postsecondary pathways. Community colleges cannot fulfill their promise without substantial progress on improving equity.



Community College Funding

With nine million students—41% of undergraduates—enrolling in them each year, community colleges serve as an important low-cost gateway to higher education in the U.S. But underfunding complicates the already difficult challenge of serving the complex mix of older, traditional-age, and dual enrollment high school students in workforce, adult basic education, and transfer programs. CCRC is [investigating state and local funding models](#) that drive or reduce inequities in student access and outcomes and increase the odds of student success. Through the [ARCC Network](#), CCRC is also examining how community colleges used over \$25 billion in federal emergency relief funding to address student and institutional needs, with an eye toward lessons for future funding. Adequate and equitable funding for community colleges is the bedrock of all reforms—essential to helping community colleges deliver high-quality instruction and services and drive economic opportunity for their students.





Taylor Myers



Tia Monahan

PODCAST

CCRC as a Training Ground

Taylor Myers and Tia Monahan, PhD students in the CCRC-led [Postsecondary Education Applied Research \(PEAR\) Fellowship](#) program, talk about how they found their way into the program and their experiences in PEAR’s research and policy apprenticeships.

[Listen now](#)

CCRC Quick Stats | 2022–23

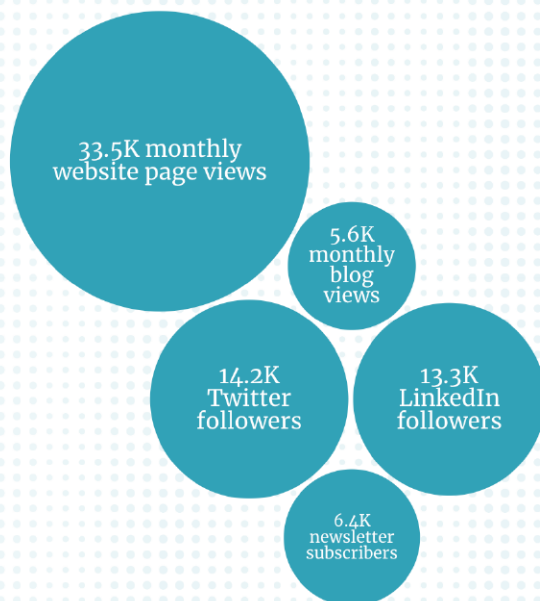
21
publications

120+
presentations

68
media interviews

29K
publication downloads

34
blog posts

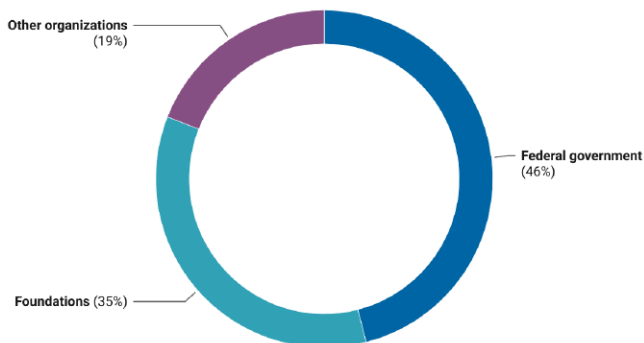


Financial Snapshot | Fiscal Year 2022–23

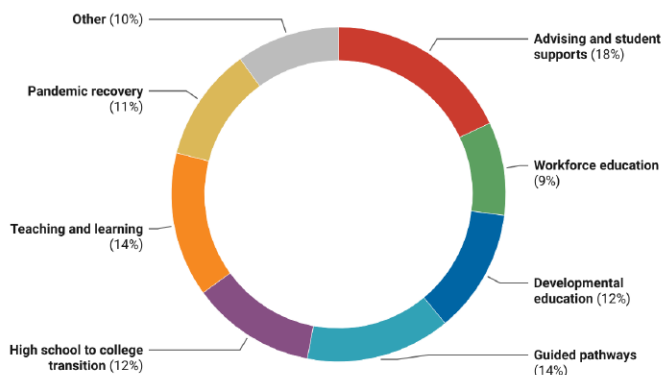
\$59 million
Cumulative total of active grants

\$10.7 million
Annual budget

Revenue by Source



Expenditures by Research Area



CCRC Funders | 2022–23

Achieving the Dream
Ascendium Education Group
The Aspen Institute
Belk Foundation
Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation
College Futures Foundation
Complete College America
ECMC Foundation
Institute for Evidence-Based Change
Jobs for the Future
The Joyce Foundation
The Kresge Foundation
Laura and John Arnold Foundation
Lumina Foundation
MDRC
Mellon Foundation
National Center for Inquiry & Improvement
National Science Foundation
Schmidt Futures
SRI International
Strada Education Network
The University of Pennsylvania
U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences
WestEd
Anonymous

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