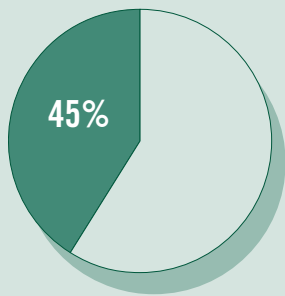


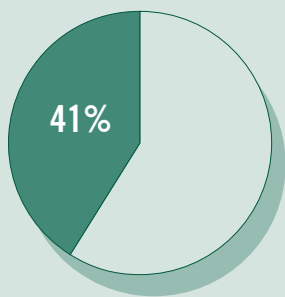
FACT SHEET

Characteristics and Challenges of Community Colleges

Fewer than half of community college students meet their educational goals



Nationally, of community college students who seek an associate degree or higher, 45 percent earn an associate or a bachelor's degree or transfer to a four-year institution within six years.



Nationally, of students enrolled in a certificate program (study oriented toward a particular job or industry), 41 percent achieve that goal, earn a degree or transfer to a four-year institution within six years.

Source: U.S. Department of Education, NCES (2001). Beginning Postsecondary Students Longitudinal Study 1996–2001 (BPS:96/01). Analysis by Community College Research Center.

Community colleges enroll almost half of all undergraduate students in the country.¹ Americans turn to community colleges to address major shifts in America's needs by providing the education that leads to greater annual economic opportunity and improved quality of life. This work is becoming more critical — and more challenging — as we strive to maintain a sound, competitive economy and a well-functioning democracy in today's world.

Globalization is driving changes in our economy, and our need for an educated workforce is increasing. New jobs are more demanding, and the demographics of the workforce are changing; employers increasingly rely on the very students who currently are least likely to complete their education. Educating a competitive workforce and stimulating local economies depend on providing educational opportunity — and maximizing educational success — for everyone. Community colleges are the places where *everyone* gets educational opportunity. Community colleges also must be the places where *everyone* can find *educational success*.

Community colleges:

- provide broad access to education through open admissions.
- enroll almost half of all undergraduate students in the country.²
- serve a range of college students, including those who are most likely to have aca-

ademic, financial and personal challenges. Twenty-nine percent of community college students have annual household incomes of less than \$20,000.³ Forty-one percent of community college students are first-generation college students.⁴

- enroll 47 percent of African American undergraduate students, 56 percent of Hispanic undergraduate students and 57 percent of Native American undergraduate students.⁵
- educate a diverse mix of students with dramatically varying goals, including getting a better job, earning a community college certificate or an associate degree, and earning a bachelor's degree.
- educate students who have significant time commitments — to their families, their jobs and their communities — in addition to their studies. Almost 85 percent of community college students work, and more than half of them (54 percent) work full time.⁶ One-third of community college students are parents.⁷ Two-thirds of community college students are enrolled part time.⁸
- educate students who value their educational experience. Ninety-five percent would recommend their college to a friend or family member, and 86 percent rate their overall educational experience at the college as good or excellent.⁹

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Opportunity is a starting point, but certificates and degrees change lives

Community colleges' commitment to providing broad access to education should be applauded. But access alone isn't enough. The factors described on the previous page create a number of challenges for community colleges and their students.

Nationally, of community college students who seek an associate degree or higher, 45 percent earn an associate or a bachelor's degree or transfer to a four-year institution within six

years.¹⁰ Of students enrolled in a certificate program (study oriented toward a particular job or industry), 41 percent achieve that goal, earn a degree or transfer to a four-year institution within six years.¹¹ An additional 9 percent of degree-seeking students and 2 percent of certificate-seeking students continue to be enrolled in college after six years.¹²

When students do complete courses, earn certificates and earn degrees, they improve their own lives and benefit the nation.

COMMUNITY COLLEGES AND OUR ECONOMY BY THE NUMBERS

85%

Students who work (full time and part time) in addition to taking classes¹³

54%

Students who work full-time jobs in addition to taking classes¹⁴

66%

Community college students who attend college part time¹⁵

29%

Students who have household incomes less than \$20,000¹⁶

33%

Students who are parents¹⁷

41%

Students who are first-generation college students¹⁸

45%

Community college students seeking an associate degree or higher who earn an associate or a bachelor's degree or transfer to a four-year institution within six years¹⁹

41%

Students enrolled in a certificate program (study oriented toward a particular job or industry) who achieve that goal, earn a degree or transfer to a four-year institution within six years²⁰

20–30%

The difference in earnings of people who hold associate degrees as compared to those who hold only high school diplomas²¹

60%

Jobs that are held by workers with at least some postsecondary education or training²²

42%

Projected new job growth from 2000 to 2010 that will require postsecondary education²³

5–15%

Economic growth that results from increasing a state's or country's average level of schooling by one year²⁴

1. American Association of Community Colleges, 2005.

2. *Ibid.*

3. U.S. Department of Education, NCES (2004). National Postsecondary Student Aid Study (NPSAS). Analysis by Community College Research Center (CCRC).

4. *Ibid.*

5. American Association of Community Colleges, 2005.

6. Wilson, Cynthia D. (July 2004). "Coming Through the Open Door: A Student Profile," Keeping America's Promise, p. 27. Education Commission of the States and the League for Innovation in the Community College.

7. U.S. Department of Education, NCES (2004). NPSAS, CCRC, *op. cit.*

8. *Ibid.*

9. Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE), 2004.

10. U.S. Department of Education, NCES (2001). Beginning Postsecondary Students Longitudinal Study 1996–2001 (BPS:96/01). Analysis by Community College Research Center (CCRC).

11. *Ibid.*

12. *Ibid.*

13. Wilson, *op. cit.*, p. 27.

14. Wilson, *op. cit.*, p. 27.

15. U.S. Department of Education, NCES (2004). NPSAS, CCRC, *op. cit.*

16. *Ibid.*

17. *Ibid.*

18. *Ibid.*

19. U.S. Department of Education, NCES (2001). BPS:96/01, CCRC, *op. cit.*

20. *Ibid.*

21. Bailey, T., Kienzl, G., and Marcotte, D. (August 2004). "Who Benefits from Postsecondary Occupational Education?" Findings from the 1980s and 1990s (CCRC Brief No. 23). New York: Columbia University, Teachers College, Community College Research Center.

22. Carnevale, Anthony P., and Desrochers, Donna M. (July 2004). "Why Learning? The Value of Higher Education to Society and the Individual," Keeping America's Promise, p. 39. Education Commission of the States and the League for Innovation in the Community College.

23. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2000–2010 Employment Projections.

24. Carnevale and Desrochers, *op. cit.*, p. 39.

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