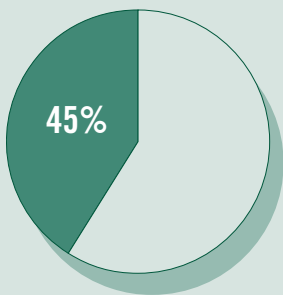


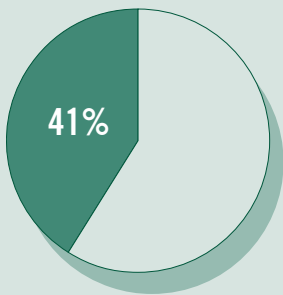
FACT SHEET

Community Colleges: Challenges and Benefits

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.*

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Almost half of all undergraduate students attend community colleges. Americans turn to community colleges to provide the education that leads to greater 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.

Globalization is driving changes in our economy, and our need for an educated workforce is increasing. Sixty-three percent of the 18.9 million new jobs that will be created by 2014 will require some postsecondary education.¹ New jobs are more demanding, and the demographics of the workforce are changing. As a result, employers increasingly rely on the very students who currently are least likely to complete their education.

As a nation, we need to educate a competitive workforce and stimulate local economies. To achieve these goals, we must provide opportunity and maximize success for everyone. This is the critical work of community colleges. Helping these colleges — making sure they are places where everyone can find educational opportunity and achieve educational success — is the critical work of Achieving the Dream.

Community college characteristics and challenges

Community colleges:

- Provide broad access to education through open admissions.
- Enroll 45 percent of all undergraduate students in the country.²
- Serve a range of college students, including those who are most likely to have academic, 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, 55 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 79 percent of community college students work, and 41 percent work full time.⁶ More than one-third are parents or have other dependents; 17 percent are single parents.⁷ More than two-thirds are enrolled part time.⁸
- Educate students who value their educational experience. Ninety-four 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

Achieving the Dream works with community colleges to overcome challenges to student achievement. 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

continued on reverse

- 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

If students aren't well served by their community colleges, many of them won't have other opportunities for education — and are more likely to be a drain on society rather than contribute to it. However, when students do attain their educational goals (complete courses, earn certificates and earn degrees), they improve their own lives and benefit the nation.

Community colleges benefit individuals

- People with associate degrees generally earn 20 to 30 percent more than people with only high school diplomas.¹³ Indeed, higher levels of education lead to higher earnings for all racial and ethnic groups and for both men and women.
- Higher education also brings all of the benefits that higher income brings, including health care, better opportunities for the next generation and more leisure time.

Community colleges benefit communities, states and the nation

- Each taxpayer dollar invested in a community college yields \$3 in benefits in regional economic development and growth that lead to increased state and local tax receipts.¹⁴
- A community college education also leads to improved lifestyles, including lower poverty rates, reduced crime and incarceration rates, improved health habits, reduced unemployment, and reduced dependence on welfare and other social safety-net programs. The result is a decreased demand on public budgets — and a 17 percent return on investment to state and local governments.¹⁵
- Increasing a state's or country's average level of schooling by one year can increase economic growth by 5 to 15 percent.¹⁶
- Higher levels of education correlate positively with higher levels of civic participation, including community service, voting and charitable giving.

COMMUNITY COLLEGE STUDENTS AND OUR ECONOMY BY THE NUMBERS

Student Characteristics

- 41% Students who are first-generation college students¹⁷
- 29% Students who have household incomes less than \$20,000¹⁸
- 35% Students who are parents or have other dependents¹⁹
- 17% Students who are single parents²⁰
- 79% Students who work (full time and part time) in addition to taking classes²¹
- 41% Students who work full-time jobs in addition to taking classes²²
- 69% Students who attend college part time²³
- 35% Students who are at least 30 years old²⁴

Student Achievement

- 45% Students seeking an associate degree or higher who earn an associate degree, earn a bachelor's degree or transfer to a four-year institution within six years²⁵

- 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 years²⁶

Employment Needs

- 60% Jobs that are held by workers with at least some postsecondary education or training²⁷
- 63% Percentage of the 18.9 million new jobs created by 2014 that will require some postsecondary education.²⁸

Economic Impact

- 20–30% The difference in earnings of people who hold associate degrees as compared with those who hold only high school diplomas²⁹
- 5–15% Economic growth that results from increasing a state's or country's average level of schooling by one year³⁰

1. Bureau of Labor Statistics (November 2005). "Occupational Employment Projections to 2014." Monthly Labor Review, p.80.
2. American Association of Community Colleges, 2006.
3. U.S. Department of Education, NCES (2006). Profile of Undergraduates in U.S. Postsecondary Education Institutions: 2003–04, p. 91.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 107.
5. American Association of Community Colleges, 2006.
6. U.S. Department of Education, NCES (2006), *op. cit.*, p. 13.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 99.
8. *Ibid.*, p. 13.
9. Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE), 2005.
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. 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.
14. Association of Community College Trustees, press release, September 18, 2003.
15. *Ibid.*
16. 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.
17. U.S. Department of Education, NCES (2006), *op. cit.*, p. 107.
18. *Ibid.*, p. 91.
19. *Ibid.*, p. 99.
20. *Ibid.*, p. 99.
21. *Ibid.*, p. 13.
22. *Ibid.*, p. 13.
23. *Ibid.*, p. 13.
24. *Ibid.*, p. 9.
25. U.S. Department of Education, NCES (2001). BPS:96/01, CCRC, *op. cit.*
26. *Ibid.*
27. 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.
28. Bureau of Labor Statistics, *op. cit.*
29. Bailey, Kienzl and Marcotte, *op. cit.*
30. Carnevale and Desrochers, *op. cit.*

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