

THE COMMUNITY COLLEGE STORY

THIRD EDITION

George B. Vaughan



THE
COMMUNITY
COLLEGE
STORY

THIRD EDITION

George B. Vaughan

The American Association of Community Colleges (AACC) is the primary advocacy organization for the nation's community colleges. The association represents more than 1,100 two-year, associate degree-granting institutions and more than 11 million students. AACC promotes community colleges through six strategic action areas: national and international recognition and advocacy, learning and accountability, leadership development, economic and workforce development, connectedness across AACC membership, and international and intercultural education. Information about AACC and community colleges may be found at www.aacc.nche.edu.

Design: Brian Gallagher Design

Editor: Deanna D'Errico

Printer: Graphic Communications, Inc.

© 2006 American Association of Community Colleges

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including, without limitation, photocopying, recording, or by any information storage and retrieval system, without written permission from the publisher:

Community College Press
American Association of Community Colleges
One Dupont Circle, NW
Suite 410
Washington, DC 20036

Printed in the United States of America

ISBN 0-87117-372-7

Foreword

In the more than a decade since *The Community College Story* was first published, higher education in general and community colleges in particular have faced an array of new challenges. Broad demographic shifts across the nation, urgent and changing workforce needs, and the need to respond to both business and societal needs in what is now a global economy and a world culture are key among them. During this decade of dramatic change, community colleges have not only met these challenges effectively but they have also continued to progress in the midst of growing enrollments and declining resources. What sustains the continued success of community colleges even while the landscape has shifted is that the fundamental mission has not changed: Community colleges continue to offer open, affordable access to higher education, regardless of the vagaries of the economy; provide comprehensive services that benefit not just the individual student but also whole communities; and, foremost, maintain an unswerving commitment to teaching and learning.

In the first six chapters of this new edition, readers will again find a concise overview of what community colleges are and what they do, along with updated demographic, enrollment, and financial statistics. In the all-new concluding chapter, “Facing the Challenges Ahead,” readers will also find an analysis and forecast of the most salient issues that the colleges must face now and into the future. As it has been for more than four decades, AACC is proactively engaged in anticipating and addressing issues and conditions to advance the work of the colleges.

AACC is indebted to George B. Vaughan for undertaking the revision of this seminal monograph. His understanding of how community colleges have evolved, combined with a lifelong commitment to their mission, contribute to the clear and contextual portrait *The Community College Story* provides.

George R. Boggs
President and CEO
American Association of Community Colleges

Contents

List of Tables and Figures	v
Foreword	vii
1 The Community College	1
2 The Mission	3
3 Implementing the Mission	9
4 Students and Faculty	15
5 Funding and Governance	21
6 A History of Innovation	27
7 Facing the Challenges Ahead	33
Milestones in Community College History	39
References	49
Resources	51
About the Author	57

Tables and Figures

Table 1.1	Number of Community Colleges: 1901–2005	1
Table 1.2	Undergraduate Fall Enrollment: 1993–2002	2
Table 3.1	Ten Most Frequently Awarded Community College Certificates and Degrees: 2002.	11
Table 3.2	Top 15 Hot Programs at Community Colleges: 2004	12
Table 3.3	Mean Earnings of Workers Aged 25 or Older, by Highest Level of Education Attained: 2002.	13
Figure 4.1	Community College Fall Enrollment by Age: 2001	15
Figure 4.2	Community College Enrollment by Race/Ethnicity: 1993	16
Figure 4.3	Community College Enrollment by Race/Ethnicity: 2002	16
Figure 4.4	Employment Status of Public Community College Students by Attendance Status: 2003–2004	19
Figure 5.1	College Tuition and Fees: 2001–2002	23

The Community College

1

In addition to offering credit and noncredit courses to a broad constituency, many community colleges serve as cultural, social, and intellectual hubs in their communities. For the purposes of this discussion, a community college is defined as a regionally accredited institution of higher education that offers the associate degree as its highest degree; however, today, in a number of states community colleges offer the bachelor's degree as well.

Most community colleges are public and receive financial support from public tax dollars. Community colleges primarily serve commuter students, and most community colleges do not have residential facilities. Every community college has its own culture and serves a unique geographic area and clientele. Today, however, at many community colleges this clientele includes people training to work in the global economy.

Regardless of their geographic region and clientele, community colleges share many of the same values, goals, and ideals for themselves and their students. Community colleges are distinguished from other institutions of higher education by their commitment to open access, comprehensiveness in course and program offerings, and community building. These commitments shape the role and scope of community colleges.

Table 1.1
Number of Community Colleges: 1901–2005

Year	# of Colleges
1901	1
1910	25
1920	74
1930	180
1940	238
1950	330
1960	412
1970	909
1980	1,058
1990	1,108
2000	1,155
2004	1,158
2005	1,186

Source: AACC (2006)

Table 1.2
Undergraduate Fall Enrollment: 1993–2002

Year	Community Colleges	4-Year Colleges
1993	5,580,860	6,950,883
1994	5,561,476	6,899,283
1995	5,475,961	6,926,327
1996	5,508,223	6,929,410
1997	5,537,978	6,931,884
1998	5,533,383	7,113,957
1999	5,573,398	7,186,072
2000	5,942,371	7,356,758
2001	6,231,837	7,634,556
2002	6,562,386	7,853,688
Change		
1993–1998	-0.9%	2.3%
Change		
1998–2002	18.6%	10.4%
Change		
1993–2002	17.6%	13.0%

Source: NCES (2004b)

Broadly stated, the community college mission is to provide access to postsecondary educational programs and services that lead to stronger, more vital communities. The way in which individual community colleges achieve this mission may differ: Some colleges emphasize college transfer programs; others emphasize technical education. The commitment to offering courses, programs, training, and other services, however, is essentially the same for all community colleges. The mission of most community colleges is shaped by these commitments:

- Serving all segments of society through an open-access admissions policy that offers equal and fair treatment to all students.
- Providing a comprehensive educational program.
- Serving the community as a community-based institution of higher education.
- Teaching and learning.
- Fostering lifelong learning.

Open Access and Equity

Access has been a major theme in American higher education since the end of World War II, and community colleges have been at the center of the nation's commitment to providing universal higher education. Community colleges have not always been open-access institutions, however. Three events contributed to making them so.

First, the children born to returning veterans of World War II—baby boomers—reached college age during the 1960s. Along with their parents, many of whom attended college with the help of the GI Bill, the baby boomers came to realize that their future opportunities would be closely linked to a college education. Second, the civil rights movement and advocacy for the rights of women and minorities broke down some of the barriers for disadvantaged groups.

Eliminating poverty and ignorance became important national goals of the Great Society envisioned by President Lyndon B. Johnson and other national leaders who promoted education, including higher education, as the most important means of achiev-

ing these goals. Third, the demands for political and social action during the 1960s and early 1970s resulted in a federal commitment to increase financial aid for higher education. The Higher Education Act of 1965, the 1972 amendments, and subsequent legislation at the national level made it possible for virtually anyone who could establish the need to receive financial assistance to attend college. The Higher Education Act, along with other federal and state programs, continues to provide financial assistance to students.

Open access to higher education, as practiced by the community college, is a manifestation of the belief that a democracy can thrive, indeed survive, only if people are educated to their fullest potential. Basic to the community college mission, then, are open-access admissions policies and fair and equal treatment of all students. Maintaining a low tuition rate and offering program choices achieve access; equity is achieved by removing barriers to access for those segments of society traditionally underserved by higher education.

Access and equity mean more than just open admissions. They mean having a college within commuting distance of most residents and giving students choices in what they study. Open access and equity mean that once a student is enrolled, the college provides support services, including counseling, academic advising, and financial aid, helping to ensure that every student has the opportunity to succeed academically. Many colleges offer child care, flexible scheduling, and distance education as part of their efforts to serve a population with diverse needs. Open access and equity mean that men and women from all ethnic, social, and economic backgrounds can afford to attend the community college and that no one is discriminated against in any academic program or service offered by the college.

Community colleges' commitment to open access in their admissions policies is perhaps the most misunderstood concept associated with these colleges. Open access does not mean that anyone can enter any program without the competencies required for effective learning. The prerequisites for entering the college transfer program at a community college are no different than they are at most four-year colleges and universities. The same is true of stu-

dents entering any number of professional programs, such as nursing. Nevertheless, the community college differs from many institutions in the nation and in the world in the following way: Rather than turn away people who do not have the prerequisites for college-level work, the community college offers avenues for students to obtain the necessary prerequisites.

The Key

One way to illustrate the community college's commitment to access is to imagine each student having a key that represents educational achievement. A student who approaches a community college will find the main door open and therefore will not need the key to enter. A student who ultimately wishes to earn a bachelor's degree, however, will look for the door labeled College Transfer, which does require a key in the form of prerequisites such as college preparatory mathematics. If the student's key will not open the College Transfer door, there are alternatives, such as short-term training leading to immediate employment, for

which the student's key may be compatible. Or the student can find the door labeled Developmental and Pre-College Courses. Like the door to the college, this one is open and does not require a key. Consequently, after completing developmental courses, the student may find it possible to open the door to College Transfer and continue on the path to a degree.

Access does not mean that anyone can enter any program without the necessary prerequisites but that options are available. Furthermore, community colleges must offer comprehensive programs with alternatives in order to fulfill the promises of access and equity. ➤

Comprehensiveness

The second commitment on which the community college mission rests, and one that relates to both open access and equity, is the commitment to ensure comprehensiveness in the college's program offerings. In addition to fulfilling the traditional university-parallel function of offering the first two years of the bachelor's program, community colleges offer much more. Indeed, in order to meet the needs of communities and to offer students the programs they want,

some community colleges are offering four-year degrees in fields such as teacher education and business.

Although it is impossible and unnecessary for all community colleges to offer all programs, students must have choices in what they study for a community college to accomplish its mission. Without choice in program and course offerings, open access and equity lose much of their meaning. For example, if the college transfer program is the only program offered, the college is not an open-access institution because students have no choice in programs. Many students who come to the community college do not meet the academic requirements for the transfer program; thus, if that program is their only choice, the door to the college is closed to them, and open access is little more than a hollow promise.

To understand why comprehensiveness is so important to the community college, one has only to consider student goals and community needs. By broadening program offerings, community colleges have extended educational opportunities to millions of students ignored by other higher educational institutions. Some students want and need programs that lead quickly to employment. Others have the desire and the opportunity to pursue careers that require lengthier periods of schooling.

Community Based

It is no accident that the word *community* is part of the community college's name. *Community based* means that a college is committed to serving the needs of a designated geographic area, often called the college's service area or service region. Although the definition of what it means for a community college to serve its community has changed over the years—including an expansion of the definition of service area as a result of online learning—to be effective, the community college will see its mission as primarily one of providing education to its local community, including educating people to survive and thrive in a global economy.

Although needs are as diverse as the communities served by community colleges and may change over time, most communities have many needs in common and expect their college to meet those

needs. Most communities want programs that permit students to transfer into a bachelor's degree program. Most want vocational and technical training, often including training that meets the specific needs of local and international businesses and industries. They expect a choice of credit and noncredit courses that lead to certificates, degrees, and diplomas. Most want the college to offer developmental courses that will help students qualify for college-level work.

Most communities want courses and activities that meet the recreational, social, and cultural needs of the community. Although cultural and social activities may not be part of a college's formal educational program, such activities enhance education and community life. Most observers agree that it is important for community colleges to sponsor art exhibits, sports events, concerts, drama productions, health fairs, community forums, and other activities that enrich the lives of the people served by the college. The decision to sponsor one event rather than another may be the result of a broad need in the community (a health fair, for example) or may be the result of an individual or group's desire to sponsor an activity. Whatever the reason, it is important that a college respond to the community's professed needs, thereby enhancing the college's mission.

Programs and activities overlap, and sometimes there is a fine line between an activity that is part of a formal education program or simply a community service. Colleges seek to remain flexible enough to respond to diverse community needs while maintaining integrity as institutions of higher education.

Teaching and Learning

The community college is devoted first and foremost to teaching and learning. Although publishing in academic periodicals is not mandatory for faculty, most community college leaders encourage faculty members to do so: Outstanding teachers must be devoted scholars, keeping up with their fields and sharing new developments with colleagues and students. The most important challenge for community college instructors is to develop the ability to adjust styles of teaching to the diverse learning styles of students.

Fostering Lifelong Learning

In the past, people may have assumed that education was an activity a person engaged in for a certain number of years, and, when that person graduated, he or she would never return to the classroom. Now, however, more people see learning as a lifelong pursuit. Many find they must continue to engage in formal learning activities, such as those offered at the community college, to keep up with the skills and knowledge required for their jobs or in order to be responsible and productive citizens.

The community college's commitment to lifelong learning encompasses an almost limitless number of credit and noncredit courses, activities, and programs designed to enhance the lives of the people in the college's service region for as long as they have the desire to learn. Students, many of whom are older adults, return to the classroom to learn new job skills and improve existing ones. A recent trend is the growing number of students returning to community college after completing a master's or other advanced degree.

One of the strengths of the community college is that it makes little distinction between the lifelong learner and the full-time student in terms of the programs and courses in which students may enroll. Many of the courses and programs lifelong learners choose are the same as those designed for degree-seeking students. As older adults return to the community college to upgrade their skills or learn new ones, the distinction between the adult learner and the full-time younger student diminishes.

Implementing the Mission

3

The community college achieves its mission through a number of programs, activities, and services. These include college transfer programs, occupational-technical programs, developmental education, community services including employee training, and a variety of support services.

College Transfer Programs

The great majority of the nation's community colleges offer transfer programs through which students can complete the first two years of college. Students enrolled in transfer programs take courses almost identical to those they would take in a bachelor's degree program at a four-year college or university. Most of the courses are in the humanities, mathematics, sciences, and social sciences.

Community college transfer programs enjoy great success. Some states accept transfer students earning the associate degree into the four-year university system without question. Most students who take the first two years of the four-year degree at a community college are successful in transferring their work to both private and public four-year institutions. U.S. Department of Education studies indicate that the academic records of community college students who transfer tend to compare favorably with those of the students who began their academic careers at four-year institutions.

Occupational–Technical Programs

Occupational–technical education programs have been an important part of the public community college's curriculum since the 1920s, and they remain essential for the United States to compete in a global economy and for American workers to keep up with the changing skills needed in the workplace. In the beginning, most public junior colleges limited their occupational programs to teacher training, office skills, and the agricultural sciences. Over time, many of these programs evolved into baccalaureate programs and have been replaced at community colleges by programs in fields as diverse as early childhood education, office management, laser optics, medical and computer technologies, auto body repair, and fire science.

A series of federal programs—including the Vocational Act of 1963, its 1968 and 1972 amendments, and the Carl D. Perkins Act of 1984 and its later reauthorizations—have strengthened community colleges' capacity to develop new occupational–vocational programs. Vocational education has been elevated to the four-year level in those community colleges that now offer the bachelor's degree in fields such as teacher education, business, and some technologies.

Why Do Community Colleges Offer Developmental Education?

For one reason or another, millions of people in the United States reach adulthood without the education necessary to compete for high-skilled jobs. Workers laid off from jobs midway through their career may lack the skills to reenter the ever-changing workforce. Immigrants who lack English-language skills also may struggle to find employment. The number of unskilled jobs is decreasing and the number of high-skilled jobs increasing. If people continue to reach adulthood without the education needed for 21st-century jobs, unemployment among unskilled workers will rise, contributing to poverty and social unrest. For the nation to remain strong, the population must be educated to meet the needs of 21st-century employers.

Community colleges have the tools to help respond to many of the nation's education needs. All community colleges offer remedial education—developmental education—that is designed to bring students up to a level of competency necessary to participate in college-level courses or to gain productive employment. Whatever the reason that students have not met the academic requirements previously, community colleges offer developmental education that prepares them for college-level work.

An educated population is vital to the nation's economic, political, and social health. As institutions devoted to universal higher education, community colleges offer developmental education as an important part of fulfilling the community college mission. ☞

Developmental Education

A number of terms are used to describe pre-college courses offered at community colleges—for example, *developmental education*, *remedial education*, or *compensatory education*. Regardless of the name, courses that prepare students to enter college-level courses are an important part of a community college's offerings.

It is not possible to describe the students who require developmental courses in simple terms. Some of the brightest students enrolling in a community college may need precollege courses before enrolling in a degree program. For example, someone who has been out of the job market and without formal schooling for 10 years and who wishes to enroll in a community college nursing program may need precollege courses in mathematics or science. Students who may not have acquired basic skills because of language barriers, a learning disability, or other learning impediments brought on by various life circumstances may need courses in English, writing, or math. In general, it is the community college perspective that society cannot afford to leave anyone behind and that developmental education is a crucial part of the commitment to access, student success, and community building.

Table 3.1
Ten Most Frequently Awarded Community College Certificates and Degrees: 2002

Field of Study	Certificates	Associate Degrees	Total
Liberal arts and sciences, general studies, and humanities	3,659	196,358	200,017
Health professions and related sciences	64,880	65,197	130,077
Business management and administrative services	37,109	71,515	108,624
Protective services	17,483	15,103	32,586
Engineering and related technologies	78	1,586	28,847
Computer and information sciences	9,873	17,590	27,463
Mechanics and repairers	18,128	7,952	26,080
Vocational home economics	11,534	7,962	19,496
Visual and performing arts	2,465	11,740	14,205
Marketing operations/marketing and distribution	8,720	4,983	13,703
Total Awarded	173,929	399,986	601,098

Source: NCES (2004a)

Note. Certificates are for programs less than 4 years in length.