



EDUCATION COMMISSION OF THE STATES

THE 2008 NATIONAL FORUM ON EDUCATION POLICY

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Session 348 – The 21st Century Community College

1. Why is the main topic of the session an important policy issue now?

- Community colleges enroll a significant percentage of all postsecondary students and typically serve a high percent of students of various ages, backgrounds, ethnicities and attendance patterns.
- Despite the diversity of the student population, community colleges are funded at much lower levels than four-year postsecondary institutions.
- Community colleges have the multiple missions of access, workforce preparation, transfer into four-year programs, developmental education and community service.

2. What policy options were discussed that would help policymakers address the session topic? What are the pros/cons of the various options (if presented)? What should policymakers take into consideration as they move to enact and implement such policy options?

Institutional Strategies

- Increase success of students in developmental education and gatekeeper courses
- Effectively use data to promote broad institutional improvement
- Provide creative remediation – situational, starts in high school, uses technology, integrated into college-level courses, includes better professional development for faculty, limit on number of credits for financial aid
- Refocus on the core mission – decrease dependence on remediation, clearly communicate mission both internally and externally
- Rethink access to community colleges (focus should not be on access to institution but access to college-level courses)

State Policy Strategies

- Make community college success an expressed public policy goal
- Provide strong state data and accountability systems
- Promote better alignment between K-12 and two-year/two-year and four-year institutions
- Promote better alignment with of programs across academic, workforce needs and between credit/non-credit courses
- Provide incentives to institutions to improve effectiveness of developmental education and first year persistence
- Implement financial aid policies that result in improved persistence
- Make tuition-free community college education options available
- Focus on improved alignment between K-12 and community colleges
- Increase accountability for community colleges – based on their mission and goals
- Ensure institutional and program roles are related to state priorities and needs
- Ensure policies address unique institutional differences and missions
- Address barriers to change caused by governance system
- Create greater coherence among levels of governance

Workforce Development Strategies

- Develop career pathways models that assess regional workforce needs, develop programs in partnership with employers that fill specific high-need jobs with a given industry or business, employ continuous improvement, expand the pathways to new jobs and fields, continue to assess regional needs
- Provide better information to students about career options and opportunities available at community colleges
- Provide incentives to encourage institutions to be more nimble and responsive to regional workforce needs
- Foster stronger relationships with employers and create greater alignment between academic programs and regional workforce needs
- Better leverage customized and contract training programs to drive academic program development and change

3. In summary, what were the three main points of the session? What were the important “take home” messages?

- Community colleges must become a greater public policy priority for states because of the changing demographics in education, the diversifying attendance patterns of students and the increased need to meet regional workforce needs.
- Community colleges must better manage their multiple missions by: aligning their mission to state needs, improving the effectiveness of their developmental education mission, and becoming more responsive to regional workforce needs.
- Community colleges should develop systems of continuous improvement and accountability that are based on data and result in better alignment between academic, workforce development and access goals.

5. Were there any resources, speakers or reports mentioned in this session that would be helpful for participants who did not attend?

Achieving the Dream: <http://www.achievingthedream.org/default.tp>

Jobs for the Future: <http://www.jff.org>

College Board National Commission on Community Colleges: <http://professionals.collegeboard.com/policy-advocacy/initiatives/community-college/commission>

Workforce Strategy Center: <http://www.workforcestrategy.org/>

ECS/Tennessee Board of Regents Developmental Studies Redesign Project: <http://www.ecs.org/tenn/index.html> (Web site launch in August, 2008)

Revvng the Education Engine. - ECS will be holding a series of online jams on the topic of the alignment of education and economic development policy. For more information on how you can participate email Bruce Vandal, Director of Postsecondary Education and Workforce Development at bvandal@ecs.org

KnowledgeWorks Foundation: http://www.kwfdn.org/adult_learning/career_pathways/

Joyce Foundation: <http://www.joycefdn.org/Programs/Employment/ViewSubProgram.aspx?SubProgId=10>

Community College Research Center: <http://ccrc.tc.columbia.edu/>