

Perspectives

Community College
Leadership for the
21st Century

SUMMER 2019

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Higher education is in the midst of a revolution: institutions, processes, providers, delivery and financing models, student demographics, and even societal and political perceptions of the value of higher education are, and have been, changing rapidly.

- Maggi Murdock and David Wendler

[T]he focus has expanded from access and enrollment to include student success and completion. That shift has required many community colleges to reinvent their philosophies, processes, staffing, infrastructure, and more.

- Shanna Smith Jaggars

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Changing Lives from the Middle: Concentrating on College Completion and Beyond

Tyjaun A. Lee, PhD

President
Metropolitan Community College -
Penn Valley and Maple Woods
Kansas City, Missouri

Some of Brianna Shank's fondest memories were from her short time spent in high school. At the tender age of 14 she found herself in a predicament that a lot of young ladies sometimes find themselves in – she was pregnant and terrified. Her pregnancy was tough in that she was quite ill and spent a great deal of time in and out of the hospital for six months. Because of her illness, she fell behind in school and unfortunately had to drop out. Shortly after her daughter's birth, she left home and started working to care for herself and her child.

Times were certainly tough, but she had the support of her parents and other family members she could lean on. During this time of great struggle, the thought of school and getting her high school diploma never left her mind. She had attempted a few GED programs, but none of them seemed like the right fit. Then one day while surfing the web, she came across the story of a young woman her age who was attending the Middle College Program being offered at Metropolitan Community College – Penn Valley.

After doing some further research into the program, she saw that a lot of people just like her had successfully completed the program. She thought that it could be the push she needed to ultimately realize her dream of becoming a dental hygienist. She decided to call to get more information and upon hearing the voice of Ms. Annette McDonald, the program's lead instructor and extended learning specialist, she knew that she had found her home and the push she needed to succeed.

"When I heard her voice, I knew instantly that this was the program for me," Brianna shared recently. She thanked McDonald for all of her care and effort that it took to see her dreams come true. "You remind me of my fifth grade teacher, who was my absolute favorite," she said. "I think it's amazing the drive you have to push all of us who come from different parts of the struggle!"

Brianna graduated this year from the program and plans to continue her studies in the fall where she will be pursuing a degree as a dental hygienist. Stories like Brianna's aren't unique in that there are dozens of students just like her that speak to the importance and critical role programs like the Middle College Program currently offered at MCC – Penn Valley provide to students seeking to better their lives and communities.

The program's beginning grew out of a conversation I had with Dr. Mark Bedell, the superintendent of

Kansas City Public Schools (KCPS), shortly after my arrival as president of the Penn Valley campus. He and I met during one of his visits to campus to meet with the students of the Early College Academy, which is housed on our campus. Later we met again during a joint meeting between the Kansas City Public Schools and the Full Employment Council (FEC) to explore options for deepening our partnership. Shortly after that meeting, I received a call from Mr. Bedell asking if I would be interested in developing a new program for Kansas City residents. I asked him a few questions about funding, meeting schedules, and next steps, and hung up so that I could begin brainstorming just how we would bring this worthwhile program to fruition.

The program, which aims to be access-driven, also addresses the need to look beyond access and success.

In November of 2017, I met with two KCPS administrators at the school system's administrative offices to begin designing what would ultimately become the MCC – Penn Valley KCPS Middle College Program. As it is designed, the program serves individuals 18 to 24 years of age who have dropped out of KCPS. The students receive their instruction on MCC – Penn Valley's campus instead of in a traditional high school setting so that they are in an environment that is more conducive to their learning and comfort. The program exists to provide comprehensive programming services to strengthen the academic skills, knowledge, and occupational skills to WOIA (Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act) eligible out-of-school youth between the ages of 16 to 24. It aims to serve at least 30 students per year.

Since the program is designed as an alternate path towards academic success, students receive tutoring, study skills, and dropout prevention interventions. Students also receive a high-school diploma through the Missouri Option Program upon completion of the program. In addition, students are also provided with assistance in the transition to post-secondary education, advanced training/occupation skill training or unsubsidized employment. Students also participate in leadership development opportunities including community service and peer-centered activities that encourage responsibility and other positive and social and civic behaviors. Student eligibility is determined by the FEC through an application and interview

(continued on page 4)

EMERGING LEADER PERSPECTIVES

As today's community colleges struggle to cope with one immutable constant – change – we continue our conversation about the impact of change on our colleges. In this issue, we'll look at the evolution of the historic focus on access to today's emphasis on student success, completion, and beyond. With the student focus shifting to the life-changing goal of career success, community colleges are searching for ways to help students overcome academic and life challenges. We posed the following question to emerging and national leaders. Their answers appear below.

Kenneth Hawkins, MA

Professor of English
Hillsborough Community College
Tampa, Florida

I read recently that community colleges are like HBCU's (historically black colleges and universities). What a profound statement, but how could that be? Community colleges are not mostly African-American. I found this concept particularly interesting as I am a Morehouse College alumnus. Although ultimately I completed my undergraduate at a PWI (predominantly white institution), I look to the "House" as my home college. That began me thinking about community colleges in terms of what has drawn me to them. Could it be that, as an English professor at Hillsborough Community College in Tampa, I chose to work here because of some intuitive sense that I was giving back to an HBCU? Could it be that, unbeknownst to me, I found myself back in Atlanta with students who didn't come from the best of backgrounds, or whose impoverished parents wanted better for them and hoped an education would make all the difference?

Yes, I believe that's what community colleges do. They provide second chances to people, many of whom are people of color. GPA's and low SAT scores won't prevent a student from getting a solid education here. HBCU's, like community colleges, accept students who ordinarily wouldn't get into the big schools, and then prepare students to enroll in the larger state schools, and, in some cases, the Ivy Leagues. The future of community colleges is inextricably linked to HBCU's in that both deal with an investment in students of color, in particular Black males, who continue to maneuver through or past racism in order to achieve a diploma, something community colleges are doing a better job at than other institutions of learning (Wood and Harrison, 2014). "For those Black males attending public colleges, the selection of post-secondary institutions is overwhelmingly in favor of community colleges, where 70.5% of them will enroll" (p. 87).

Indeed, community colleges serve as the last bastion of second chances. In a time where immigrants struggle without having full citizenship, the job of community colleges is to insulate these students who don't want trouble, but a way out. In a recent article, Bill Maxwell, Tampa Bay Times columnist and Miami-Dade College instructor, writes about his students, most of whom are Hispanic. He writes his students make teaching worth something and give him incentive to keep doing his job, a job that can become mundane. When engaging students on why college is relevant, "They said that education is essential to them and their families; that education offers the straightest path to becoming 'real' Americans; that respect for and courtesy toward their professors is a must. One student said that college is a family affair. Dreamers want to build successful lives so that, among other endeavors, they can help their parents" (August 2, 2019).

QUESTION OF THE MONTH:

How are community colleges addressing the challenge to look toward - and beyond completion?

Patti D'Avignon, MS

Director of Student Success
Muskegon Community College
Muskegon, Michigan

As the Director of Student Success at Muskegon Community College (MCC), my entire job is focused on helping our students be successful at whatever goal they have set for themselves. While

we love when students complete a degree with us, it is more important that they are able to make it through a course first. We are starting to see more and more the challenges students have outside of academics and not understanding a topic. Food and housing insecurities, transportation problems, finding a job, and mental health are just some of the issues that we see on a regular basis with our students. All of these challenges can cause students to fall behind in their academics. When students are worried about how they are going to feed their families, it can be hard to focus on the test that they have to take this week. Therefore, it is up to the college to help our students make it through these challenges and help them complete their goals.

So how do you pick a challenge? At MCC, we do not pick one thing to help with. We know our students have all of the challenges and more listed above. We are continually looking for new ways to support our students. Using our early alert system, we ask our faculty to tell our Care Team when a student seems to be falling behind and whether there might be some other problem that is leading to that lag. By involving the faculty, we are able to link the student to many different resources on and off campus. These services range from tutoring to housing resources to the Jayhawk Pantry and many others. It is our hope that we can continue to reach out to students who need our help before it is too late.

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We also opened the Jayhawk Hub in January 2019, which is a one-stop location for providing students with a wider range of support services and resources, ranging from the Jayhawk Food Pantry to free tax preparation. Also housed here are both a benefits worker and a foster care education worker from the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services. We use these resources to help our students with those everyday challenges of paying rent and putting food on the table. Without these services, how can a student see completion? We have made it our personal goal to create more options of resources to do whatever we can to help our students complete their goals at MCC.



Kenneth Hawkins, MA, is a professor of English at Hillsborough Community College in Tampa. He earned his master's degree from National University in La Jolla, California, and worked as a high school teacher for fourteen years before becoming a full-time college instructor. Hawkins' English thesis and other published articles rest on the relationship between race, politics, and opportunity. He currently is enrolled in the DCCL program at Ferris State University.



Patti D'Avignon, MS, has been with Muskegon Community College in Muskegon, Michigan for 19 years, starting as an administrative assistant shortly after graduating with her AAS from MCC. She earned her MS in Career and Technical Education in Administration from Ferris State University, and now serves as the Director of Student Success at Muskegon Community College. Currently, Patti is pursuing her doctorate in the DCCL program at Ferris State University.

NATIONAL LEADER PERSPECTIVE

As today's community colleges struggle to cope with one immutable constant – change – we continue our conversation about the impact of change on our colleges. In this issue, we'll look at the evolution of the historic focus on access to today's emphasis on student success, completion, and beyond. With the student focus shifting to the life-changing goal of career success, community colleges are searching for ways to help students overcome academic and life challenges. We posed the following question to emerging and national leaders. Their answers appear below.

The People's Colleges: Looking Beyond Access and Graduation

Cindy Miles, PhD

Chancellor, Grossmont-Cuyamaca Community College District
East San Diego County, California

Elisa Robyn, PhD

Founding Academic Dean, College of Contemporary Liberal Studies
Regis University, Denver, Colorado

The new maxim for higher education is that even change is changing. This is the 8th straight year of declining enrollments, smaller institutions are closing at unprecedented rates, and demands are shifting from degrees to careers (Schroeder, 2019). Community colleges (CCs) are feeling the pinch from all sides. Four-year institutions are reducing entry requirements, boosting online options, and introducing individualized student services systems. New postsecondary providers are targeting working adults and nontraditional students (Moody, 2019). All this swirls amidst a stormy national debate over whether college is worth it at all (Shell, 2018).

In this setting, the best CCs are challenging the spandrels of outdated programs, cafeteria-style advising, and gateway courses that doom students to remedial purgatory. Since launching as the "people's colleges" in 1901, two-year colleges have become beacons of affordability and diversity, providing egalitarian access to higher education combined with practical vocational training (Trainor, 2015). As CCs matured, however, many became over-committed to their processes and mired in academic debates, such as whether a proper college education must include algebra and Aristotle.

The most dynamic CCs are revisiting their heritage as higher education innovators. They are redesigning themselves with guided pathways to student success (Bailey, Jaggars, & Jenkins, 2015). They are replacing mandatory placement tests and developmental course sequences with accelerated options to eliminate what Cuyamaca College Professor, Terri Nichols, calls the "math pipeline of doom" (Burks, 2017). Shifting focus from equal access to equitable success, they are customizing learning supports to individual student needs and asking, "Are we ready for our students?" rather than "Are our students ready for college?" They are embracing the new reality that students want preparation for high-demand, well-paying careers that promise a secure financial future.

Responsive CCs recognize job readiness and placement as key institutional effectiveness benchmarks and ultimate measures of student completion. Many are revamping and expanding their career-focused certificates and degrees in stackable forms, crisply tailored to meet industry needs. As bachelor's degrees become entry-level requirements for more professions, CCs are building guaranteed 2+2 completion degrees with transfer institutions, hosting university partners on campus, and offering the community college baccalaureate. Currently, some 120 public community colleges in 25 states offer more than 400 baccalaureate degree programs (Durrani, 2019). These degrees are meeting high demand and emergent workforce needs, such as water quality management at Red Rocks Community College (CO), health information management at Mesa College (CA), and biomanufacturing at MiraCosta College (CA).

Career centers are moving from the end of the academic line to the starting gate. No longer just the home for the campus job board, high-performing career centers are working proactively with students on externships and

QUESTION OF THE MONTH:

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work-based learning opportunities throughout their college pathway. Career specialists are helping students link course credit to real-life experience and translate these to LinkedIn resumes.

Looking beyond standard success measures calls for nontraditional collaboration to reach low-wage incumbent workers. A partnership between the

nonprofit [Education Design Lab](#), [Palo Alto College](#), and [Goodwill Industries](#) is providing more than 400 frontline workers in San Antonio (TX) with skills for high demand fields such as logistics and supply chain management.

Another emergent trend is the use of digital badges as a part of the national micro-credentialing movement aimed at verifying mastery of skills. The [Community College of Colorado system](#), in partnership with [Credly](#), offers digital badges in areas such as math and computer technology with the goal of cultivating a "viable digital badge ecosystem of badge earners, badge issuers and badge consumers." Students are posting digital badges on their virtual resumes and social media profiles to validate professional development, build a personal brand, and bolster their career capital. Employers are using badges to verify the skills of job applicants, particularly in the global technology sector (Reese-Johnstone, 2018).

Digital badges also are being used to document student achievement of in-demand employability skills—the non-technical "soft skills," such as critical thinking, communication, problem solving, and collaboration. Through its [New World of Work](#) initiative, the California Community College system developed open-source digital badging content for 10 employer-driven essential 21st Century Employability Skills, now available to all 115 colleges in the state. One of the authors initiated a unique badging program demonstrating activities and achievements aligned with the college mission, used to promote a values-based organizational culture.

Ultimately, CCs need courageous leadership throughout the organization to navigate this era of redefinition and reinvention. Keeping an equity-minded eye on who is included and succeeding at every step is essential to ensuring that all students have access to high quality careers beyond the diploma. Such an approach builds on the foundational social mindedness that brought democracy's colleges to their current pinnacle of appreciation (Singletary, 2019). The reward for moving beyond such laurels is nothing less than placing the American Dream within honest reach of all.

Cindy L. Miles, PhD, is chancellor of the Grossmont-Cuyamaca Community College District, bringing her commitment to quality, equity, and success to the diverse population of 30,000 students in East San Diego County. Her service on local, state, and national boards includes the American Association of Community Colleges, Higher Education Research & Development Institute, Global Corporate College, San Diego Regional Economic Development Council, and more. She previously served community colleges as a faculty member, administrator, and founding campus president for institutions in five states.



Elisa Robyn, PhD, was the Founding Academic Dean of the College of Contemporary Liberal Studies at Regis University in Denver. Over the course of her career, Robyn has also served as the Dean of Arts and Sciences at the Community College of Denver and as Interim Vice President of Academic Affairs at the Rocky Mountain College of Art and Design. She has also held a number of teaching positions at colleges and universities across Colorado, and has published two books and numerous articles.

QUICK TAKES
Highlights from
the Field

Clearing the Path to a Brighter Future: Addressing Barriers to Community College Access and Success

by Sara Goldrick-Rab, Katharine Broton, and Christin Gates

While community colleges have historically focused on providing access to higher education, degree attainment has emerged as an equally important goal. In an effort to increase both access and student success, concern exists regarding the ability of our institutions to provide the assistance and support needed for students to persist and complete. This paper examines achievements of an ACCT and Single Stop partnership forged to support goals of access and attainment.

Access this work here: <http://bit.ly/2OZHs5A>

Community Colleges and Student Success: Models for Comprehensive Reform

by Thomas Bailey

The importance of a college education has grown for both society and for individuals as evidenced by the large earnings gap between those with a high school degree and those with a postsecondary credential, yet most students who start in U. S. community colleges never complete a degree or certificate. This article examines the growing focus on college completion, including the barriers to student success and the associated need for comprehensive reform.

Access this work here: <http://bit.ly/31uqopV>



Published by the Alliance for Community College Excellence in Practice, Ferris State University, Doctorate in Community College Leadership Big Rapids, Michigan

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Changing Lives from the Middle... (continued from page 1)

process. The FEC also provides bus passes, gas cards, and child care for participants of Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) recipients. Additionally, the FEC provides students with Labor Market Employment Information, which assists them in selecting a career as they progress through the program.

The program, which aims to be access-driven, also addresses the need to look beyond access and success. Throughout the program, FEC students receive paid and unpaid experiences. Students get job readiness training, occupational skills training (which includes pre-apprenticeship program opportunities), job placement, and entrepreneurship training. Students are guided throughout every step of the program which helps them to simplify their academic or career goals by receiving frequent feedback, targeted support to help them stay on track, and predictable schedules. To date, over 50 students have completed the program and 75 percent of those students have gone on to enroll at MCC to complete a credential. For the upcoming year, we hope to see 60 students successfully complete the program.

I believe that today, more than ever before, it is our task to prepare students to be fully involved in the world around them, to be content producers as well as consumers, and to be active participants in the community that surrounds them.

When I first arrived here to begin my tenure as the new campus president at MCC – Penn Valley, I was excited and joyful about all was to come; namely how I could contribute to student success and achievement. Dr. Kimberly Beatty, who had previously served as Vice Chancellor of Instructional Services and Chief Academic Officer at Houston Community College, had recently been named as the new CEO and so I knew that MCC was positioning itself to do great things for the residents and the community at large. Dr. Beatty and I had worked together at Tidewater Community College in Virginia, where I had served as Associate Vice President of Enrollment and Student Services, a district position that allowed me to serve all four campuses at that institution to ensure that we were consistent in our processes and procedures.

I was thrilled that Dr. Beatty and I would have the chance to reconnect here at MCC, one of the oldest institutions of higher learning in the state. The college has a reputation for being the first to ever award an associate degree, and its mission is to serve students, serve communities, and create opportunities. Today, I am proud to help continue the institution’s long history of helping students from all walks of life realize their dreams and potential. I believe that today, more than ever before, it is our task to prepare students to be fully involved in the world around them, to be content producers as well as consumers, and to be active participants in the community that surrounds them.

We could not have found a better partner in our journey than Kansas City Public Schools, whose motto is “Strong

Schools. Strong Communities. Successful Students.” By joining with us in this effort, the school system is proving that we are stronger when we work together. I believe this commitment to student success and access will no doubt serve as inspiration for the 30 students we serve each year in the program who will reap the benefits of this partnership for years to come. While this program may appear to be a boutique program on the surface, it has grown such that we’ve been able to hire another instructor and aide for the upcoming year. Thanks to the program’s continued success, there currently is a waitlist for students hoping to enroll. Schools can no longer exist in a vacuum in our society and with each passing day we realize that students need to be able to see beyond the walls of their classroom and beyond the boundaries of their neighborhoods to see themselves and their learning as part of a much larger world.

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We now live in an age of interconnectedness, where the global village has allowed us access to information at a rate faster than ever before. We have to be able to give students the tools they will need to critically analyze that information, make sound judgments for themselves, draw their own conclusions, and then join the world debate as fully informed and impassioned citizens of this country and our world. Middle college programs like ours are the key to ensuring that students will be able to meet any challenge they might face and succeed.

Dr. Tyjaun A. Lee serves as the campus president of Penn Valley and Maple Woods campuses at Metropolitan Community College. She is responsible for all campus operations, the Heath Sciences Institute, and all academic and student services on the Penn Valley Campus. Prior to arriving at MCC, she served as Vice President for Student Services at Prince George’s Community College. In that role, she was responsible for managing administrative units, programs, and student services including recruitment, enrollment, student development, retention, marketing, athletics, and the coordination of the operational oversight of auxiliary services for students.



She is a recent inductee in the Black Achievers of Kansas City and serves on the board for Literacy KC and the Broadway Westport Council. She is also the current President of the American Association of Women in Community Colleges, an affiliate council of the American Association of Community Colleges. She also is past President for the National Council on Student Development, and is a member of the American Association of Community Colleges – Pathways Commission. Lee has been nationally recognized with awards and appointments for her exceptional leadership capabilities and her work with underrepresented and underprivileged students. She earned her masters and PhD at Ohio University, where she was appointed to be the Holmes Scholar by the OU School of Education.