

Perspectives

OCTOBER 2020

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Community College Leadership for the 21st Century

Our most meaningful and mindful work on the foreseeable horizon is envisioning how we want our institutions to serve the students and companies of the future.

- Jen Worth

In an economy where mobility was ebbing even before the Covid-19 pandemic, now is the time for community colleges to reshape themselves to put opportunity at the center of their mission.

- Matt Sigelman and Joe Fuller

Leveraging a Statewide Community College for Indiana's Rapid Recovery

Sue Ellspermann, PhD

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SVP Workforce and Career
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Indiana

Community colleges have a mission of training our nation's workforce. We are the first line of training, education, and credentialing for Americans to move from low-skill, low-wage jobs to medium- and high-skill, high-wage careers. Almost half of all post-secondary students attend community college and the majority of these students are working adults, many with dependents. At Ivy Tech, two-thirds of our students are working adults with a quarter of those having at least one dependent.

Over the past four years, Ivy Tech has been transforming to become workforce aligned, utilizing Emsi data and local employer data insights, and is ever more student-centered. Our actions have included implementing predominantly 8-week courses, proven to have higher success for adults, required advising to credential completion, and redesign of online courses. This has led to a nearly doubling of completions of high-demand, high-wage credentials while maintaining associate degree production to transfer institutions.

The Impact of COVID-19 in Indiana.

The COVID-19 pandemic has been shown to most heavily impact workers of color, often in frontline service and essential jobs. Most could not work from home as their jobs were often in a retail store, a healthcare facility, a restaurant, or hotel. Overall, Strada Education Network found that workers without a post-secondary credential were half as likely to enroll in an education program as those with a post-secondary credential. Black and Latinx workers were more likely than their white counterparts to be laid off.

As the engine for our state's economy, it was imperative to have a comprehensive approach based on alignment of resources, engagement in an individual- and employer-centric manner, and advancement of our key objectives along a demand-driven curve.

When COVID-19 struck, Indiana's leaders and Ivy Tech Community College took swift and thoughtful actions to protect the health and well-being of our citizens, students, faculty, and staff. At the College, we moved fully to virtual and online in approximately two weeks. In addition, and in

terms of the economic health of our state, Ivy Tech moved with haste in leading the economic recovery strategy for our fellow Hoosiers. As the engine for our state's economy, it was imperative to have a comprehensive approach based on alignment of resources, engagement in an individual- and employer-centric manner, and advancement of our key objectives along a demand-driven curve.

A Rapid Recovery Ecosystem.

In late March, we and our colleagues in government, business, and philanthropy formed the ad hoc Rapid Recovery Committee. Comprised of leaders from Ivy Tech, the Governor's Workforce Cabinet, Indiana Commission for Higher Education, Department of Workforce Development, Office of Career Connections and Talent, Indiana Chamber, and Strada, the Committee focused on aligning and optimizing resources to support unemployed and underemployed Hoosiers. Key areas of emphasis were training and education opportunities, career coaching, labor market demand data, and collaborative resource sharing. The underlying concept considered how we might leverage Ivy Tech to help Hoosiers gain new skills quickly, making them more marketable for their current or new jobs.

The Rapid Recovery Committee undertook an immediate situation assessment to better understand dynamic shifts already occurring in the labor market. Some sectors, such as restaurants, hospitality, and services were being hit especially hard as Indiana's unemployment rate rocketed from just over 3% to more than 17%. It quickly became apparent that labor market supply and demand were misaligned and required more analysis to determine actions needed within the economy. The evolving ecosystem focused on the livelihoods that were at greatest risk.

Coming out of the situation assessment, the Rapid Recovery Committee began assessing supply and demand using real-time unemployment data, Emsi labor market impact analyses, reports from Brookings Institute and American Enterprise Institute (center left and right respectively) for contextual analyses, and grassroots intelligence from Ivy Tech's 18 campus chancellors and economic sector vice presidents for employer input. Regular reports issued by Strada and Gallup were incorporated into the weekly assessments to glean key consumer and learner. All of this resulted in a weekly, now monthly, Rapid Recovery Report covering the economic and workforce situation in Indiana, produced by Ivy Tech, for hundreds of thought leaders and stakeholders across the state.

Ivy Tech - the Bridge of Opportunity.

Recognizing our role in Indiana, Ivy Tech prioritized one specific goal: make our economy stronger by understanding and responding to employer needs and providing students with the skills required to succeed in the workforce. Committed to helping lead the way toward Indiana's

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FERRIS STATE UNIVERSITY

DOCTORATE IN COMMUNITY COLLEGE LEADERSHIP

Empowering graduates to advance community colleges towards excellence and community responsiveness through exemplary leadership.

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EMERGING LEADER PERSPECTIVES

The COVID-19 pandemic has caused an unprecedented upheaval in every aspect of life in our country this year, most especially in the world of work. Although it is uncertain what jobs will look like when the pandemic finally subsides, educators stress that earning a postsecondary credential will be more important than ever, and that community colleges will be expected to play a key role in helping their communities rebound. We posed the following question to emerging and national leaders. Their answers appear below.

Julie Howar, DBA

Dean of Corporate & Community Education
Illinois Central College
East Peoria, Illinois

Nothing could have prepared us for the chaos that ensued due to the COVID-19 pandemic. My campus, and I imagine yours, shut down around the week of spring break with a plan to switch over, in two weeks, to a completely virtual environment. Faculty, staff, and administration pivoted quickly to what we thought was a short-term solution that has now turned into months of extremely little in-person interaction. Working from home, we heard news stories of local lay-offs and businesses closing. We still struggle with the unintended consequences and aftermath of our states and local communities suffering from a troubled economy and the regulations imposed on businesses to keep the pandemic at bay.

While the pandemic has been difficult recently, economic fluctuations consistently occur over time. We see the nation's economy ebb and flow between years of prosperity and growth, followed by a recession and downturn with high unemployment. Community colleges are in a unique position to help our local employers rebound from hard times. To do so, however, we must plan for them; we must be proactive, rather than reactive.

We can be proactive by forging relationships with federal, state, and local governments, as well as private donors, to leverage financial resources that can be used to retrain and upskill the workforce. We can build coalitions with Workforce Innovation Opportunity Act (WIOA) offices, chambers, and economic development offices to help us determine what training is needed, and which employers need help. We can also reach out to community and faith-based organizations to find support for our students to help them be successful as they retrain.

Our own employees need strong leaders who can help them understand the mission and who can anticipate the workforce and economic needs of the community. Leaders need to build a strong culture, supportive of the mission that can help pull all the needed pieces together. Administrators and staff must find meaningful ways to ensure student success through academic supports and services. Faculty and workforce programs can work to build stackable credentials, short-term programs, and certificates to help students quickly upskill and retrain. Finally, to be proactive, community colleges must work to be nimble, innovative, and responsive to market needs.

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What we are currently experiencing is the extreme once-in-100-years situation, and it has created hardships that most have never seen in our lifetimes. However economic instability is almost certainly going to happen again, pandemic or no. Community colleges can prepare for times of economic downturn by holding true to their mission and continuing to build access to resources and local organizations that, when brought together, can make a tremendous impact on the lives of their constituents and help to sustain the economic viability of their communities.



Julie Howar, DBA, serves as Dean of Corporate & Community Education at Illinois Central College. Julie has worked in higher education in various roles for over twenty years. Most recently, after having been an academic dean for six years, her passion for workforce initiatives lead her to move into her current position. She holds an MBA from William Woods University (MO) and is a proud member of DCCL Cohort 8.

QUESTION OF THE MONTH:

What can community colleges do to help facilitate economic recovery in their regions?

Curt Rendall, MA

Executive Director, Work Ready Program
Development and Innovation
Heartland Community College
Normal, Illinois

Community colleges are well poised to help facilitate economic recovery in their regions. As a result of effort invested and innovations adopted over the past decade, community colleges have aligned their programs to meet industry demand for high-tech, high-wage positions, increased their program flexibility, and integrated participant supports. Together, these changes to the community college model enable individuals to earn certificates and degrees in often-compressed timeframes despite barriers and while attending to various personal, family, or employment obligations.

The three major steps community colleges must take to facilitate regional economic recovery are to publicize their strength and capacity to serve individuals and employers, continue to make their programs more accessible and achievable, and position their institutions to harness upcoming state and federal investments in community colleges to build future programs and local resiliency.

In the current moment of personal and economic uncertainty and turmoil, community colleges must share their story, their alumni success, and their relationships with regional employers. In my conversations with even the most high-tech and cutting-edge employers, their demand for workers with strong skills in the fundamentals of industrial technology, business, and computer science is as high as ever, and colleges already have these programs with capacity to grow. Community colleges must communicate the reality that there is no better place for individuals and employers to turn to when it comes to relaunching careers and upskilling their workforce.

Additionally, community colleges must continue the work of making their programs ever more accessible and achievable. Proven strategies to address barriers to access and completion include Pathways, Stackable Credentials, Prior Learning Assessments, Open Learning Formats, Competency Based Education, and Work Based Learning, including apprenticeships. Along these lines, my institution is planning the implementation of a Flexible Learning in Industrial Technology Education (FLITE) open lab based on proven Open Entry/Early Exit models. These models increase access to high-skill training by converting traditional three-credit hour semester-based courses to one-credit hour competency-based modules that can be completed in an open lab format around students' schedules.

Finally, the coming years are likely to bring new investments in workforce training through state and federal grants potentially including a \$2B Community College and Industry Partnership Grants program modeled after the TAACCCT grant. Community colleges must begin planning to maximize this coming investment to ensure programs keep pace with industry and build local resiliency. By leveraging existing systems and programs, connecting with students and employers, creating stackable, industry-aligned certificates, and maximizing future investments, community colleges will lead regional economic growth in uncertain, ever-changing times.



Curt Rendall, MA, serves as the Executive Director, Work Ready Program Development and Innovation at Heartland Community College in Normal, Illinois. In this role, Curt works with numerous regional partners and colleagues to help grow Career Technical Education in central Illinois. He earned a Master of Arts in Teaching from Northwestern State University in Natchitoches, Louisiana, and is in the final year of his DCCL program at Ferris State University.

NATIONAL LEADER PERSPECTIVE

The COVID-19 pandemic has caused an unprecedented upheaval in every aspect of life in our country this year, most especially in the world of work. Although it is uncertain what jobs will look like when the pandemic finally subsides, educators stress that earning a postsecondary credential will be more important than ever, and that community colleges will be expected to play a key role in helping their communities rebound. We posed the following question to emerging and national leaders. Their answers appear below.

Back to New Normal: COVID & Beyond

Gordon Freedman

President, National Laboratory for Educational Transformation
Managing Director, Knowledge Base, LLC
California

The imposed transition to remote learning can be perceived as an unwelcome catastrophe, or a time to clean house, re-orient and adapt to the needs of the times. Likely, most colleges will land somewhere in between. However, what is not going to happen is a return to the "old normal."

Responding vs. Innovating.

Community colleges are unusual institutions. Wonderful, diverse, and committed, with fuzzy boundaries. Colleges and districts are also creatures of history, affected by prevailing times. While some colleges can be maddeningly traditional and cautious, others are clever, resilient, and innovative.

When external realities mandate change or when the times point to new opportunities, colleges respond, having done so for a hundred years. The historic COVID-19 pandemic is a case in point. Life on campuses has changed drastically as has the economy, leaving a guidance gap or void along with slashed budgets.

Standing at the Crossroads.

What makes community colleges unique is that they occupy the middle-space between high school and higher education, between work and better work, between unemployment and the hope for work. Since this mixture is complex, many colleges, districts, legislatures, and government agencies try to find the magic mix but rarely do. Why is this?

Winston Churchill is credited with saying, "Never let a good crisis go to waste." So how might colleges take advantage of this crisis? One option is to go after big problems while concentrating on steering the ship in difficult seas. Here are five approaches to contemplate.

1. Shifting Administration and Instruction to Online-on-Demand. COVID-enforced remote learning created something that legislators and super-vendors could not, a 100% academic and administrative online reality. While the chorus of complaints are overwhelming, the simple truth is that it is working, but not perfectly. What's critical is that this is not about online learning only. It is about online administration, online support, online learning training and outcomes tracking. Doing this well will cut costs, lower overhead, improve direct contact with students, and provide use-data to inform efficiencies and better understand barriers.

2. Moving to Everyone-Tethered and Accounted For. Colleges lose when students are not connected centrally across all their activities. Most colleges are a game of Twister with programs that are online and off, administrative offices in different physical places with different websites and processes, multiple logins for a range of online solutions, some faculty who use non-standard apps. Going remotely-connected all the time for everyone, whether being online or on campus, is a difference in degree and scale that colleges would do well to consider. This way each student or adult learner would have all of their activity in one common system or app, just like we all do in many everyday apps.

3. Bridging or Minding the Gaps. Because community colleges are forever in the middle of life, academic, and occupational experiences, they have to connect more systematically across sectors and life barriers or transition points than schools or universities. The fuzzy connections between

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institutions, agencies, and employers should be dealt with straight on. There are no shortage of pilots, Federal grants, and national foundations looking for pathway solutions for student continuity between organizations. All of them are underfunded

or underdeveloped and ultimately are projects, not solutions. Colleges and student lose in these scenarios.

4. Making Up for Past Omissions. Why do matriculating students increasingly show up at college without adequate command of English and Math, now exacerbated by COVID? It is unclear why legislatures do not penalize school districts or reward colleges for helping to get students college-ready and work-ready before they enroll in community college. This is a huge burden for colleges. Why couldn't more preparation and connection exist between schools and colleges, an expansion of the highly successful dual enrollment models. This should not be rocket science, though the question of who would pay is thorny.

5. Putting the Employers More Squarely in the Picture. Employers do not have much time to plan with colleges for building employment pipelines into their operations for the simple reason that times are too difficult to predict, and employers are too busy managing for day-to-day for survival. Most colleges subscribe to LMI (labor market information) services to predict demand in various regional employment clusters. This is proximate and the models change radically with the times. This means that colleges need to do as much recruitment of human relationships with employers as they do in recruiting and retaining students. There should be creativity in this space, but who at the college will manage it?

Turning the Battleship.

Each of these problems or opportunities are large set-pieces that are considered part of life, immovable. Like the turning radius of a container ship, change comes slowly, or it does not come at all. To turn the battleship on any one of these large issues requires a combination of policy, modeling, designing, piloting, and adjusting. This process is not in the DNA of many get-it-done colleges but it's good to ask why? Big problems cause more problems.

The only way to take advantage of this crisis is to aggressively network with other colleges and unexpected partners, meet with legislators and financial modelers, and do not be hemmed in by the limitations of existing technology vendors. Solve day-to-day problems as a way to gather the evidence and motivation needed to tackle the "big ones."

Gordon Freedman helped evolve the fields of education technology and online learning and is now an advocate for broad-based change across the K-to-Career spectrum. Freedman is President of the [National Laboratory for Educational Transformation](#), a California-based research and development nonprofit committed to transformational change in K12 and workforce development, recipient of NSF, DOL, NIST, Gates and public institution grants. He is also managing director of [Knowledge Base, LLC](#), a consulting firm established in 1998 to provide services to institutions, publishers, and education technology start-ups. Freedman formerly served as Vice President Global Education Strategy, Blackboard Inc., during its growth from 100 million dollars in annual revenue, to going public, to its exit at 1.4 billion dollars. During his tenure, he traveled to 19 countries examining learning models and policy strategies, launched the Blackboard Institute, and provided thought leadership for the company globally. He was part of the start-up of California State University Monterey Bay, the dot-com portal HungryMinds, the Prometheus Learning Management System at George Washington University, and recently the Precision Institute at National University.



QUICK TAKES Highlights from the Field

Practitioner Insights for Recovery: Five Reasons Why Community Colleges Are Key to Our COVID-19 Recovery

by JFF's Policy
Leadership Trust

The pandemic disrupted all aspects of our nation's health and economy earlier this year, with higher education negatively impacted as well. Given the widespread societal disarray, the members of the JFF Policy Trust – all community college practitioners – pose five key reasons why investments and policies that support these institutions are essential to combatting the COVID-19 crisis and revitalizing the economy.

Access this work here:
<https://bit.ly/3IHL201>

10 Ways Colleges and Universities Can Advance the Post- Pandemic Economic Recovery

by Steven Mintz

Noting that little good news grew out of the pandemic crisis, the author stresses that this is the exact time that higher ed can and should rise to the occasion by playing a vital role in driving the nation's economic recovery and providing social services to communities. Ten additional meaningful ways that colleges and universities can contribute to the post-pandemic recovery are outlined.

Access this work here:
<https://bit.ly/30SNw3l>

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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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Leveraging a Statewide Community College for Indiana's Rapid Recovery (continued from page 1)

recovery and in close collaboration with our Rapid Recovery Committee colleagues, Ivy Tech began deploying key initiatives to draw upon our strengths as a College with statewide reach. These initiatives not only complemented our mission, they underscored our legacy as a bridge of opportunity between relief and transformation, and as a beacon of hope in challenging times.

We began this work in the late spring, offering 10,000 free online classes in relevant high-demand areas, including advanced manufacturing, business, and cybersecurity. The response was outstanding, with individuals throughout the state enrolling in and completing courses to make them better equipped to succeed in a current or new field. We also began working to make our Career Coaching and Employer Connections team available to all Hoosiers, regardless of any past association with Ivy Tech, via webinars and virtual career fairs. And, we launched a resource page exclusively for Indiana employers that was added to our website (IvyTech.edu/employerresources).

Ivy Tech has also partnered with community- and faith-based organizations to better understand the needs of Indiana's most vulnerable citizens and communities. The goal is to work with grassroots organizations in more effectively reaching our fellow Hoosiers who have been disproportionately affected by the COVID-19 crisis and systemic social and economic challenges.

Taking Hoosiers to the Next Level.

Throughout the summer Ivy Tech saw applications and enrollments lagging – as much as 40% in early summer and still over 10% at the beginning of this Fall Semester. This followed Strada's findings and community colleges' experiences that those who were most impacted by the pandemic, often low income and students of color, had the most difficulty enrolling and continuing their education.

To remove further barriers and target Indiana's newly unemployed and those impacted most by COVID, Ivy Tech partnered with the Department of Workforce Development and Indiana Commission on Higher Education to provide and market first-dollar-inclusive tuition scholarships on 16 high-wage, high-demand, short-term credentials, which could be completed full- or part-time in six months or less. This program is currently being marketed to 700,000 Hoosiers with Ivy Tech capacity for 7,000 new students for a late October start and continuing through the spring term.

Hoosiers can sign up and earn credentials in five high-demand fields: IT & Business Services, Advanced Manufacturing, Logistics & Transportation, Health & Life Sciences, and Building & Construction. These are fields poised for growth in our state in the near and long term.

Ivy Tech has a proven track record of preparing workers for careers in these sectors and is responding to the needs of today's students by offering classes online, face-to-face, and via a hybrid model. Individuals can often complete programs and earn credentials in just a few months. And, Ivy Tech has simplified its enrollment process so that Hoosiers can get started easily and finish quickly.

To make sure those who enroll in a Workforce Ready Grant program complete successfully and find good jobs, Ivy Tech will provide career coaching services, tutoring, advising, and other support services. This is especially important for adults who are entering college for the first time or re-entering after many years in the workforce. Visit IvyTech.edu/nextlevel to learn more.

Where To From Here?

We know the Ivy Tech mission is more relevant now than ever. Through these initiatives, we are aligned to serve as the

engine behind Indiana's rapid recovery and to provide hope for our fellow Hoosiers.

While it is too early to say what Ivy Tech and community colleges' "new normal" will be, these are our early insights:

- ▲ Blended learning will likely be the preferred method in community colleges. Hands-on and lab work are necessary. Traditional class lectures can be accomplished virtually and/or online. "Learn Anywhere," where the student chooses week to week, will serve to meet adult learners where they are;
- ▲ Partnerships with industry and government can assist in retraining workers for higher skill jobs, especially as our states' economies evolve into technology-enabled and innovation-driven economies;
- ▲ Community colleges are in a position to reinvent post-secondary education. While we should respect our relationships with 4-year partners, we should continue to listen to the "beat of the drum" from industry, adult learners, and government as we seek to respond in relevant, high values ways; and
- ▲ Community college leaders should initiate, invite, and facilitate workforce development change initiatives rather than waiting to be approached or incited through external stimulus such as grants and funding. The latter two will follow as well designed, authentic collaboratives are built.

Sue Ellspermann, PhD, became President of Ivy Tech Community College in 2016.

Ivy Tech is the largest singly accredited statewide community college in the nation serving nearly 100,000 students a year and another 60,000 via dual credit in high schools, with 18 campuses across Indiana and 40+ instructional sites along with a robust catalog of online offerings. Prior to Ivy Tech, she served as Indiana's 50th Lieutenant Governor from 2013 until March of 2016. As the vice chair of the Indiana Career Council, she led efforts to align Indiana's education and workforce development system to meet the needs of employers, which is her continued focus at Ivy Tech. Her public service began in 2010 when she was elected as the State Representative for District 74. Ellspermann was the founding Director of the Center of Applied Research and Economic Development at the University of Southern Indiana and also owned and operated Ellspermann and Associates, Inc, an independent consulting firm licensed in the training and facilitation of Simplex Creative Problem Solving. Ellspermann holds a PhD and an MS from the University of Louisville.



Chris R. Lowery, MSM, is Senior Vice President, Workforce and Careers, of Ivy Tech Community College, where he provides overall leadership of workforce and career initiatives and organization. He develops deep collaborative partnerships with state and federal workforce and economic development organizations, private sector organizations, business associations, and

other groups pursuing workforce and economic development and training solutions for Indiana. Previously, he served as Chancellor for the Columbus/Southeast Region of Ivy Tech. Before coming to Ivy Tech, he led Public Policy and Engagement at Hillenbrand, Inc. Prior to joining Hillenbrand, Lowery was Executive Director of the Association of Indiana Counties, an aide to former Indiana Governor Robert D. Orr, and an aide to then-Senator Dan Quayle. He earned his bachelors' degree at Indiana University and his MS in Management from Indiana Wesleyan University. Chris was recently recognized as the 2020 Distinguished Alumni of the IU Paul H. O'Neill School of Public and Environmental Affairs.