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STRENGTHENING COLLEGE READINESS, ACCESS, AND SUCCESS: COMMUNITY COLLEGE ROLES

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• ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS •

The Rural Opportunities Consortium of Idaho (ROCI) was launched by the J.A. and Kathryn Albertson Family Foundation of Boise, Idaho during the summer of 2013. Since then, Bellwether Education Partners and a task force of experts led by Dr. Paul T. Hill have been working to foster a better understanding of the issues that affect rural education, inform policy discussions, and bring attention to the unique needs and circumstances of rural school children. A series of reports, published over the next year, will examine issues including migration, technology, human capital, economic development, postsecondary enrollment and persistence, and more. Papers will be posted online at www.rociidaho.com/research-publications.

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ABOUT ROCI • RURAL OPPORTUNITIES CONSORTIUM OF IDAHO

ROCI brings together some of the nation's best thinkers to conduct research on the challenges of rural education and identify innovations, programs, and models to address them. This effort informs a national body of work on rural education and explores implications for increasing the educational attainment and economic competitiveness of Idahoans and Americans.

ABOUT J.A. AND KATHRYN ALBERTSON FAMILY FOUNDATION

The J.A. and Kathryn Albertson Family Foundation is a Boise-based, private family foundation committed to the vision of limitless learning for all Idahoans. Since 1997, the J.A. and Kathryn Albertson Family Foundation has invested almost $700 million in Idaho. The J.A. and Kathryn Albertson Family Foundation honors the legacy of Joe and Kathryn Albertson, founders of Albertsons grocery store, however it is not affiliated with Albertsons LLC. Grant-making is by invitation only. For more information, visit jkaf.org.

ABOUT BELLWETHER EDUCATION PARTNERS

Bellwether Education Partners is a nonprofit dedicated to helping education organizations—in the public, private, and nonprofit sectors—become more effective in their work and achieve dramatic results, especially for high-need students. To do this, Bellwether provides a unique combination of exceptional thinking, talent, and hands-on strategic support.

• EXECUTIVE SUMMARY •

An expanding national conversation reinforces the importance, both to American society and to individual citizens, of increasing the numbers of Americans who earn a postsecondary credential with value in the labor market. This paper is aimed at supporting that conversation—and related recommendations—among the educational, political, business, and civic leaders of Idaho. A central emphasis is the critical role that can and should be played by community colleges. Across the country, and especially in rural areas, these institutions are the open-access bridge to the American Dream.

IDAHO'S CHALLENGES

Looking to the future, Idaho faces a series of conundrums. First, though the state's high school graduation rate is relatively high (78 percent in 2012), Idaho's college participation rate is alarmingly low: the rate at which the state's high school graduates go directly to college is 45 percent, compared to a U.S. average of 63 percent, thus ranking Idaho 50th out of 50 states. Then, among college enrollees in the state (adults age 25–64), 36 percent earn an associate degree or higher compared to a national average of 40 percent, ranking the state 38th out of 50.

Compounding these challenges is the fact that a large majority of students entering Idaho community colleges are academically underprepared for success in college-level work. For example, among students entering Idaho community colleges for the first time in fall 2006, about 57 percent enrolled in a developmental course during their first academic year. That statistic includes 55 percent of community college students who entered directly from high school.

Another conundrum is that the national pattern of strongly positive relationships between educational attainment and earnings does not appear to hold consistently for Idaho. Data from a variety of sources indicate that Idaho's economy relies disproportionately on low-paying industries and that even employees in relatively high-wage jobs tend, in comparison to national peers, to be less educated and to earn lower wages.

A wide array of examples, both from Idaho colleges and from institutions in other states, illustrates innovative ways that community colleges can strengthen college readiness and participation. Strategies include systematic outreach to high schools, with a targeted suite of services for their students; partnerships in building explicit pathways from high school through community college to completion of credentials and/or transfer; and statewide initiatives.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IDAHO

Eight recommendations for Idaho are focused on building a college-going culture, improving college readiness among high school students, increasing the college participation rate in the state, and building strong high-school-to-college transitions.

Because some existing Idaho programs are responsive to key issues, the recommendations may constructively serve to reinforce evidence-based initiatives, encourage resource allocation to bring effective programs to scale, and/or promote implementation of more robust and compulsory student and academic supports.

Recommendation 1 • Dual-enrollment programs for high school students should be augmented by building in *mandatory* support activities—including, for example, dual-enrollment orientation; parent engagement; student success courses or curriculum modules; completion of college and financial aid applications; early assessment of academic readiness for college (no later than junior year), followed by appropriate skill-building classes (or intensive workshops) in the senior year; academic and career planning; college visits; and enrollment in courses for the first semester at the college.

Recommendation 2 • Community colleges must focus dual-enrollment services and other efforts on the populations that are less likely to be college-bound.

Recommendation 3 • Advising (including both academic and career planning) in high schools and colleges should provide prospective and current college students with data-informed scenarios about career pathways, opportunities for employment in specific fields (in Idaho and elsewhere), projected earnings (at entry level and beyond), and the levels of educational attainment associated with high employment and high wages.

Recommendation 4 • Idaho should support further development of models that place community college success coaches on-site in high schools, with specific assignments to provide the kinds of activities and supports described above.

Recommendation 5 • Consistent with leading-edge community college work across the country, institutions should be supported in work to design clear, structured academic and career pathways for students—pathways that explicitly lead to transfer and/or careers providing family-supporting wages.

Recommendation 6 • The community college pathways ultimately should be extended into high schools through intensive collaboration with K–12 systems—with particular attention to Common Core standards alignment. This is a necessary step in reducing the need for remediation as students enter college.

Recommendation 7 • Concomitantly, there must be clearly articulated and consistently implemented university transfer pathways that students can navigate without loss of credits, and with their associate degree program credits applicable to the transfer major in the university.

Recommendation 8 • Community college pathways, particularly through professional/technical programs, must be better aligned with the Idaho economy and with state and local strategies for economic and workforce development.

None of these recommendations can be implemented cost-free. The challenging tasks for community college leaders (along with their K–12 colleagues) are to rigorously examine the effectiveness of existing programs, consider high-impact programs in other colleges, and commit to serious reallocation of existing resources in order to implement effective practices at scale. The task for education leaders and policymakers at the state level, as well as for the philanthropic community, is to create policy and fiscal conditions within which community colleges can do the work their students, communities, and state need them to do. The costs of *not doing this* will inevitably be paid in terms of threats to economic prosperity and quality of life for the citizens of Idaho.

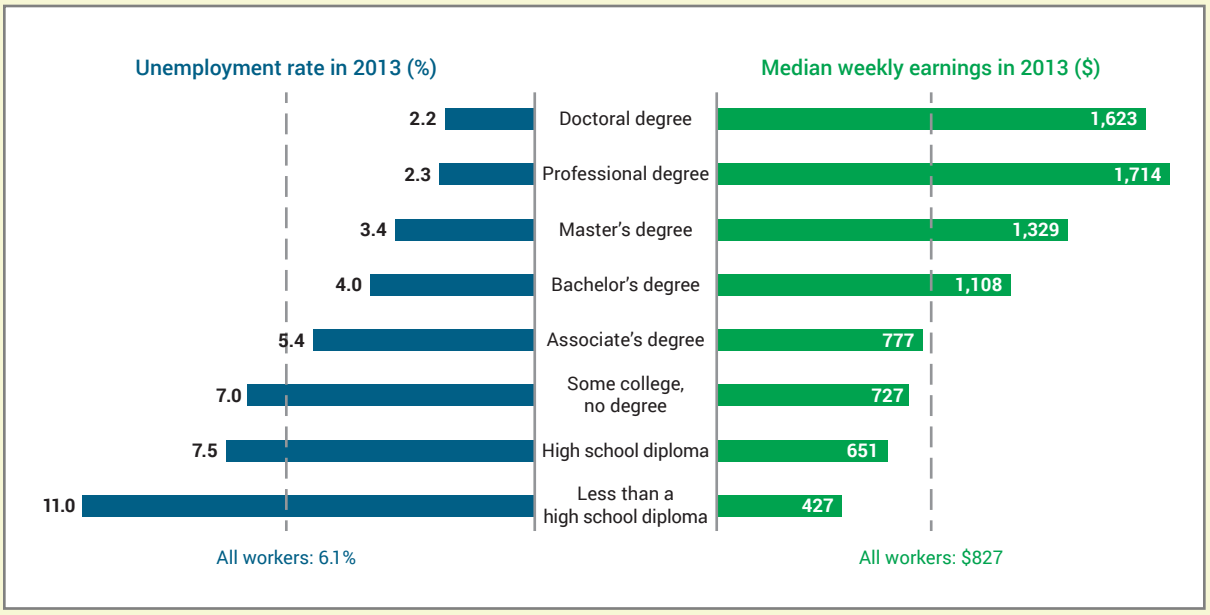
• HIGHER EDUCATION PARTICIPATION AND ATTAINMENT: WHY CARE? •

An informal summary of the literature on correlates of educational attainment in the U.S. would go something like this: The more educated a person is, the more likely she is to be employed; to be earning a family-supporting income (and thus, if applicable, to move out of poverty); to be paying taxes; to be active in the community and democracy—volunteering, giving blood, voting, participating in the political process; to be capable of meeting the health and educational needs of her children; to ensure that those children eventually will be better off than the previous generation; and conversely, the less likely she is to be publicly dependent—that is, unemployed, on welfare, or in prison.

The College Board updates important data regarding the returns on educational attainment and documents these benefits in its 2013 report, *Education Pays: The Benefits of Higher Education for Individuals and Society*.[1] And the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics depicts the positive relationships between educational attainment in earnings alongside the negative relationships between educational attainment and unemployment, seen below in **Figure 1**.[2]

• Figure 1 •

EARNINGS AND UNEMPLOYMENT RATES BY EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT



Note: Data are for persons age 25 and over. Earnings are for full-time wage and salary workers.

Source: Current Population Survey, U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Department of Labor

Lewin and Braak (2015) similarly describe returns on educational attainment in both economic and social terms:

> Most of us realize that education is a ticket to higher private earnings; on average some 7.7 percent more for each additional year of schooling…We tend to look at the private returns of education when making policy and investment decisions, but the wider effect of education, or *social returns* to education, are probably the biggest payoff for regions. These social returns include positive externalities (side effects) that range from better health to lower poverty and political stability, and can strengthen a region's overall economy and future (p. 2).[3]

This association—that is, higher educational attainment related to higher income and other outcomes valued both by individuals and the society—has in recent years produced unprecedented national focus on improving college-going and college completion rates in the United States. That focus has been sharpened by changes in the American labor market and by global competition. From the White House, President Obama has called for efforts to ensure that Americans once again become the most highly educated population in the world. Governors in 33 states have joined the Complete College America Alliance, pledging

directed effort to achieve substantial increases in postsecondary credentials. Philanthropies have invested in small- and large-scale initiatives to build a college-going culture, strengthen college readiness, and redesign educational experiences for college students in order to improve outcomes and equity. And many individual institutions of higher education, sometimes working in partnership with K–12 systems, have risen to the challenge.

COMMUNITY COLLEGES CALLED TO THE COMPLETION AGENDA

In 2012, the American Association of Community Colleges (AACC) commissioned the 21st Century Commission on the Future of Community Colleges to consider societal and economic challenges, scrutinize the role and performance of the community college sector, and offer recommendations for the future. The Commission included not only community college CEOs and national association leaders but also respected leaders from university and K–12 education, business and industry, and nonprofit organizations. Through a year of reading, discussion, and listening to experts, the Commission lifted up evidence of a number of trends, including a shrinking American middle class, a decline in per capita family income, and increasing income disparity. It also brought to light a skills gap decried by employers, and continuing slippage in U.S. standing relative to many other countries in terms of the educational attainment of the population. Ultimately, the Commission asserted that if these trends are to be reversed, much of the heavy lifting in that effort must be done by the nation's community colleges. Further, though, the Commission emphasized in its report the stark reality that while considerable reform work is underway, community college student outcomes are unacceptably low. The Commission's major premise was summarized in three sentences:

> **The American Dream is at risk. Because a highly educated population is fundamental to economic growth and a vibrant democracy, community colleges can help reclaim that dream. But stepping up to this challenge will require dramatic redesign of these institutions, their mission, and, most critically, their students' educational experiences."[5]**
>
> **21st Century Commission on the Future of Community Colleges**

Two major recommendations set forth in the Commission report, *Reclaiming the American Dream: Community Colleges and the Nation's Future*, provide a frame for this paper, calling for dramatic improvements in both college readiness and college completion rates—goals to be accomplished without sacrificing access or academic quality, while also placing high priority on achieving equity in student attainment.

RECOMMENDATIONS FROM "RECLAIMING THE AMERICAN DREAM: COMMUNITY COLLEGES AND THE NATION'S FUTURE"

1. Increase completion rates of students earning community college credentials (certificates and associate degrees) by 50 percent by 2020, while preserving access, enhancing quality, and eradicating attainment gaps associated with income, race, ethnicity, and gender.

2. Dramatically improve college readiness: By 2020, reduce by half the number of students entering college unprepared for rigorous college-level work, and double the number of students who complete developmental education programs and progress to successful completion of related freshman-level courses.

Source: AACC (2012). *Reclaiming the American Dream: Community Colleges and the Nation's Future* (p. 26)

These are not timid aspirations. They speak, however, to necessary steps toward the desired future for individual Americans, their communities, and the nation.

• A BEGINNING: COLLEGE READINESS AND COLLEGE PARTICIPATION •

The purposes of this paper are to build on that national discussion but also to "bring it home" to Idaho. To that end, it reviews Idaho's status in terms of educational attainment of the state's population, highlights its particular challenges, and most centrally, notes the current and potential roles of the state's community colleges in addressing those challenges.

Community colleges in Idaho and elsewhere have multiple roles in increasing college completion.

At the outset, it must be noted that community colleges in Idaho and elsewhere have multiple roles in increasing college completion. Included are critical work in economic and workforce development, as well as the complex task (in collaboration with universities) of building seamless transfer pathways for students moving from associate degrees to the baccalaureate and beyond. Equally important is the internal work of designing dramatically improved educational experiences for their own diverse student populations. While acknowledging the breadth and importance of those responsibilities, this paper focuses only on community colleges' work in improving college readiness among high school students and increasing college participation—sometimes through their own programming efforts, but very often, and perhaps most important, through comprehensive and effective partnerships with their respective K–12 education systems.

THE IDAHO CONUNDRUM—MULTIPLIED

While numerous national and state-level efforts have rallied around the calls for increased college completion, Idaho deals with an unusual conundrum.

Idaho's educational attainment picture, according to census data, provides cause for concern: Among adults age 25–64, the percentage earning an associate degree or higher is 36 percent compared to a national average of 40 percent, ranking the state 38th out of 50.[6]

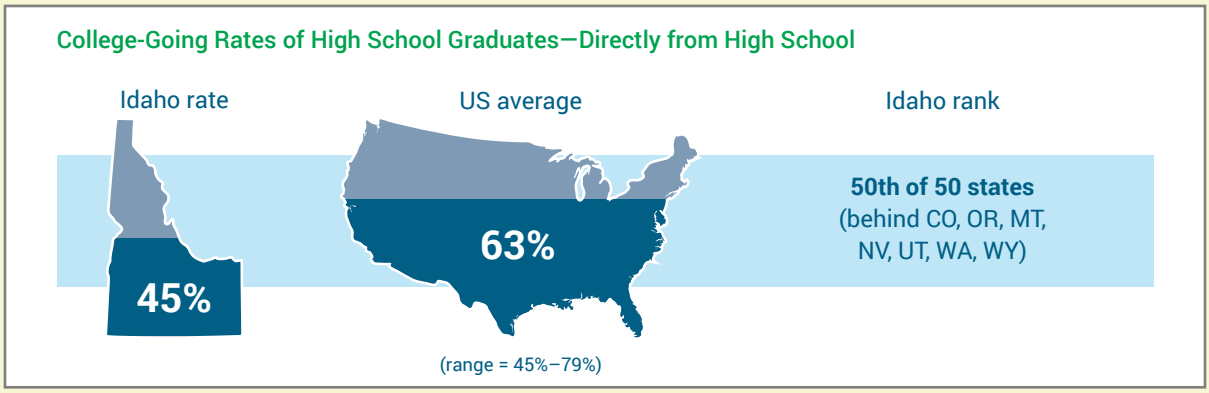
Consistent with the educational attainment data—and a central focus of this paper—is that Idaho, according to several indicators, has an alarmingly low college participation rate compared to the nation and most neighboring states (see **Figure 2**). The rate of high school graduates who go to college directly from high school is 45 percent, compared to a U.S. average of 63 percent—ranking Idaho 50th out of 50 states.[7]

Examining 9th graders' chances for college by age 19 (that is, the number of fall first-time college freshmen enrolled anywhere in the U.S. as a proportion of 9th graders four years earlier), Mortenson (2010) reports the Idaho student probability at 38 percent, compared to 44 percent nationally, which places Idaho at a rank of 41 out of 50 states.[8]

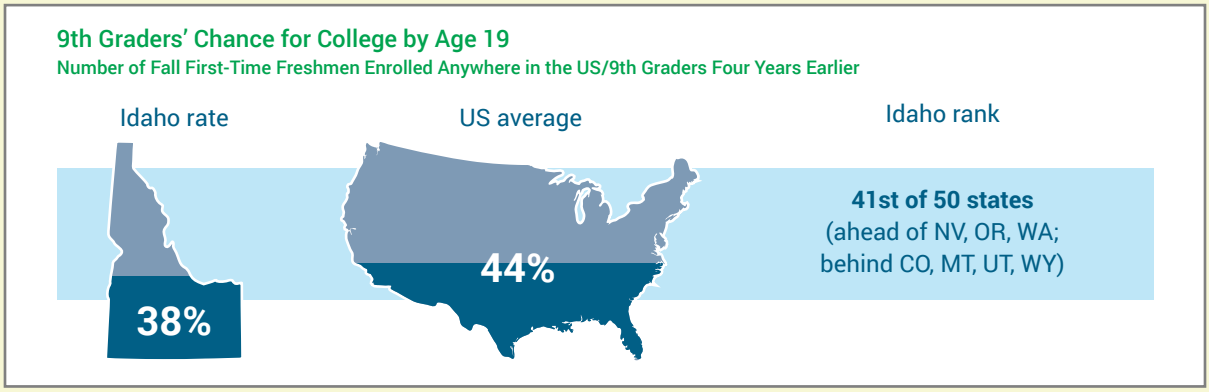
And in yet a different look at college participation, the percentage of Idaho's 18- to 24-year-olds enrolled in college is 30 percent, compared to a national average of 44 percent. In this survey, Idaho places 48th out of 50 states.[9]

• Figure 2 •

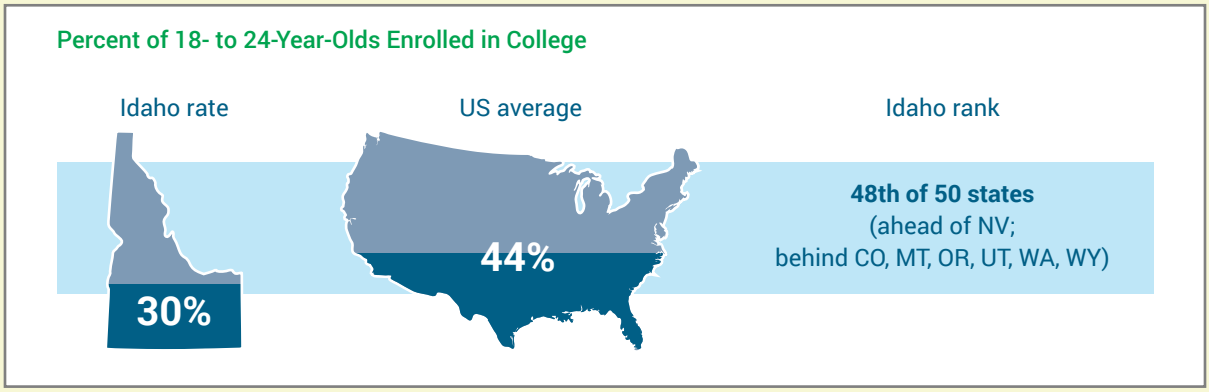
COLLEGE PARTICIPATION IN IDAHO



Source: Mortenson, T. (2010). College-going rates of high school graduates—directly from high school. Postsecondary Education Opportunity. http://www.postsecondary.org.



Source: Mortenson, T. (2008). Chance for college by age 19. Postsecondary Education Opportunity. http://www.postsecondary.org.



Source: National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), IPEDS Fall Enrollment Survey. http://www.nces.ed.gov. US Census Bureau, Population Estimates, 2009.

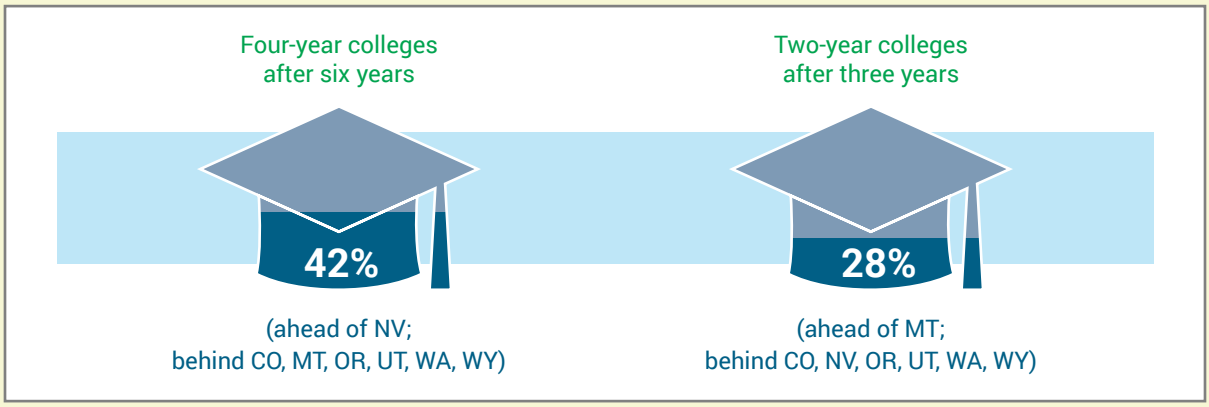
Note: All data in this figure are available in various formats and customized reports on the NCHEMS data dashboard website, www.higheredinfo.org.

The economic and social impacts of relatively low educational attainment are partially explained by the fact that among college-going students, Idaho produces low college completion rates relative to the rest of the nation. Federal data indicate that the graduation rate for Idaho's four-year colleges (42 percent after six years, for first-time, full-time, degree-seeking students) ranks 44th in the country, while Idaho community colleges, with a 28 percent graduation rate after three years (for first-time, full-time students), rank somewhat higher at 24th. (See **Figure 3**).

These comparatively low educational attainment and college graduation rates occur despite the companion fact that Idaho's high school graduation rate, at 78 percent, places the state at a rank of 16th relative to all other states. (See **Figure 4**). **Thus, the first Idaho conundrum: Relatively high graduation rates from high school do not translate to high college participation and completion rates.**

• Figure 3 •

COLLEGE GRADUATION RATES IN IDAHO

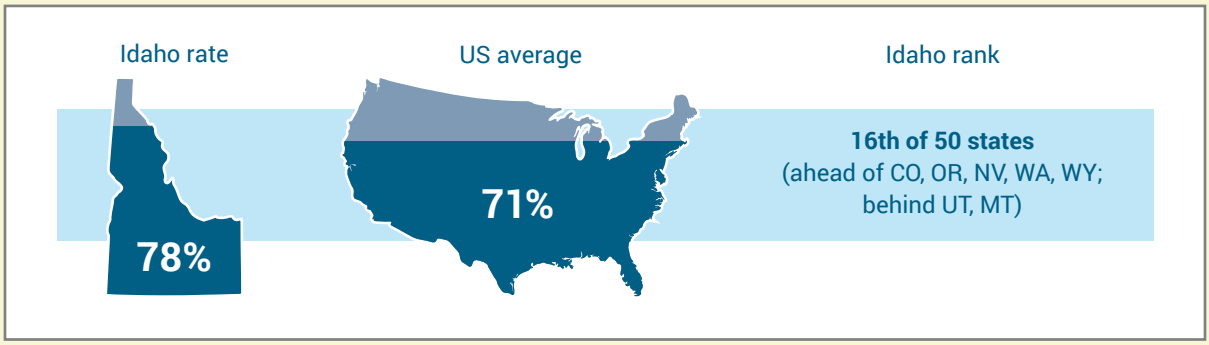


Source: NCES: IPEDS 2009 Graduation Rate Survey via www.higheredinfo.org (NCHEMS).

• Figure 4 •

PUBLIC HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION RATES

PERCENT OF 9TH GRADERS WHO GRADUATE FROM HIGH SCHOOL ON TIME



Source: NCES: Common Core Data (2012).

The second Idaho conundrum is that the common national pattern of a strongly positive relationship between educational attainment and economic well-being does not, in some ways, appear to hold consistently for Idaho. As illuminated by Lewin and Braak (2015)[10], a number of facts collide and combine to produce that unique situation:

- Idaho has the second-lowest per capita personal income in the U.S., while leading the nation in low-income workers (p. 2).
- The Idaho economy is based mostly in low-wage industries (p. 2).
- Idaho residents' average earnings have been on a declining trend since 1980 (p. 2).
- "…Idahoans with a college degree earn less than most of their peers elsewhere in the U.S. … However, workers with lower levels of education (12th grade and below) are paid the same in Idaho as in the nation" (p. 3).
- "…[T]he earned income gap between Idaho and the nation increases with higher levels of education and experience" (p. 4).
- "…[T]otal earned income of full-time workers in Idaho is on average seven percent lower than the national average. The difference in years of schooling accounts for about 17 percent of the total earned income gap between Idaho and the USA, while Idaho's industry mix accounts for about 30 percent of this gap" (p. 5).
- "…Idaho's economy is not only biased towards low-paying industries but workers in high-wage occupations, with noted exceptions, tend to earn less, and have less education, than their national peers" (p. 6).

Taken as a whole, these facts may serve as a significant disincentive for Idahoans to pursue postsecondary credentials. Further, changing these facts will require the focused efforts of multiple parties in Idaho, including community colleges and universities, K–12 systems, policymakers, business and economic development leaders, community-based organizations, and philanthropic organizations.

VARIANCE IN EARNINGS BY PROGRAM OF STUDY

Lewin and Braak (2015) also take an extensive look at earnings in various industries in Idaho, demonstrating in part that the relationships of earnings to educational attainment vary by occupational field. This variance in the earnings-related value of postsecondary credentials has been well documented in a number of states.

For example, Liu, Belfield, and Trimble (2015),[11] in a study focused on North Carolina, found that the highest earnings return on associate degree attainment were (in order) in nursing, mechanics and welding, allied health, engineering, and protective services. By contrast, the lowest earnings gains were for associate degrees in the humanities. A similar pattern was found by Jepsen, Troske, and Coomes (2014),[12] who examined Kentucky data showing that the highest quarterly earnings were for associate degree holders in health, vocational, and business fields (in that order), while associate degrees in humanities and other academic areas were associated with the lowest quarterly earnings.

Findings from these and other studies are summarized by Mina Dadgar (2014)[13] as follows:

- Overall, community college credentials in the several states examined lead to large wage gains, as well as greater likelihood of employment.
- There are especially high returns for associate degrees: they have higher returns than other credentials in most fields.
- However, the majority of associate degrees awarded are in the liberal arts and are associated with low returns in terms of wage gains; thus, colleges should ensure that these degree programs are tightly articulated through transfer pathways to the baccalaureate.
- Short-term certificates have minimal returns in most fields; therefore, they should be designed to be stackable and used as building blocks for long-term certificates and associate degrees.
- Other states should undertake similar analysis using UI wage data.

- It is important to fund longer-term credentials, especially in technical fields and health, even though their per-student costs are higher.
- Counseling in high schools and in community colleges should focus on communicating the earnings value of specific community college credentials.

Complicating the picture, Booth (2014)[14] reports that sub-degree certificates (offered either by community colleges or by third-party industry entities) can lead to substantial earnings gains, when data are examined by program of study. Similarly, Bahr (2014)[15] examined earnings gains by community college students across California, looking specifically at earnings by program of study and at earnings differentials by type of credential (e.g., short-term certificate, long-term certificate, and associate degree) within particular programs of study. What he found was enlightening: the earnings return on credits earned in many career and technical education subfields is "significant, positive, and oftentimes strong," while, in contrast, the return on credits earned in non-career/technical subfields "tends most often to be negative" (p. 1). A further finding, surprising to many, is that the economic returns to students who do not earn credentials can be as large as or even larger than returns to credential earners, "*depending upon the coursework that students complete*" (p. 1, italics added).

A significant challenge for Idaho may lie in the fact that well over half (58 percent) of all certificates and associate degrees awarded by Idaho community colleges in 2013 were in social sciences, humanities, and other non-STEM fields.

Given these accumulating findings, a significant challenge for Idaho may lie in the fact that well over half (58 percent) of all certificates and associate degrees awarded by Idaho community colleges in 2013 were in social sciences, humanities, and other non-STEM fields.[16] As noted above, these areas are likely those where the earnings gains from an associate degree, while sometimes positive, are least notable. The optimal value of an associate degree in liberal arts, social sciences, and the humanities is realized only when students transfer that credential to a four-year institution and complete the baccalaureate. There are major implications here for three areas of focused work in Idaho and elsewhere:

1. Career counseling and advising in high schools and community colleges that provide prospective college students with realistic scenarios about their probable earnings (upon graduation and projected over time) in a particular field, their opportunities for employment in the field (in Idaho and elsewhere), and the levels of educational attainment associated with high employment and high wages
2. Stacked credentials in all programs of study, carefully linked to regional labor markets
3. Clearly articulated (and consistently implemented) university transfer pathways that students can navigate without loss of credits and with their associate degree major program credits applicable to the transfer major at the university level

• RURAL COMMUNITY COLLEGES •

An increasingly known fact is that community colleges enroll almost half (46 percent) of the undergraduates in the U.S. Less well known is the fact that rural community colleges comprise 56 percent of all community colleges (553 out of 992 publicly controlled institutions),[17] according to the basic classification developed in 2010 by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, now managed by the Center for Postsecondary Research at Indiana University Bloomington. Adding 31 tribally controlled colleges[18] brings the total to 584 rural and tribal institutions.

Rural community college enrollment for calendar year 2007–2008 totaled 3.5 million of the 10.2 million credit students enrolled in community colleges nationwide.[19] At least during the first decade of the 21st century, rural institutions were the fastest-growing geographic subgroup within the community college sector.

Moreover, rural community colleges are typically important resources in their communities, providing open admissions and access to a variety of educational experiences: general education (Associate of Arts and Associate of Science degrees), typically for transfer; professional and technical programs (including short-term and long-term certificates as well as associate degrees); workforce development and contract training programs; and academic skill-building opportunities (often called developmental education) for students who arrive underprepared for college-level work. Importantly, these colleges also provide a variety of community services and noncredit continuing education opportunities and often serve as regional centers for the performing and fine arts.

> For millions of students, the choice is not between a community college and another institution, it's between a community college and nothing."
>
> **Cohen and Brawer (2008)**

But in these times, it is access to postsecondary educational opportunity that matters most. As famously asserted by Cohen and Brawer (2008), "For millions of students, the choice is not between a community college and another institution, it's between a community college and nothing."[20]

Analysis conducted by Lewin and Braak (2015) adds weight to the importance of higher education in rural areas, demonstrating relationships between educational attainment and poverty reduction:

> Our results suggest that higher levels of education do reduce poverty levels, and more so at higher levels of rurality…[T]he share of high school dropout workers is correlated with the share of people in poverty. For example, in rural counties with cities of 20,000 people or more, adjacent to a metro area, a percentage point decrease in the share of adults without a high school diploma correlates to a decrease in the poverty level of 0.44 percentage points; in the case of rural counties with cities of 2,500 people or less, nonadjacent to a metro area, this decline is about 0.62 percentage points. On the other hand, the share of adults with at least a bachelor's degree or higher does not affect the poverty level in rural counties with cities of 20,000 people or more, adjacent to a metro area or not. But it has an effect in rural counties with smaller cities below 20,000 people. This effect is directly proportional to the level of rurality of the county. For example, in most rural counties with cities of 2,500 people or less, a percentage-point increase in the share of adults with at least a bachelor's degree correlates with a reduction of 0.52 percentage points in the poverty level (pp.17–18).[21]

Despite these facts, a persistent reality is that rural student participation rates in postsecondary education remain lower than those of their non-rural peers. Intuitive explanations for that discrepancy are not unequivocally supported by evidence.[22] This means that special challenges confront the community colleges of Idaho, and a high degree of both ingenuity and focus will be required if those institutions are to contribute to significant improvements in college participation.

• IDAHO'S COMMITMENTS AND CHALLENGES •

Idaho has committed to membership in the Complete College America (CCA) Alliance[23] and thus has agreed to certain actions expected of Alliance members:

1. Set Completion Goals for Degrees and Credentials
2. Collect and Report Common Measures of Progress
3. Develop Action Plans and Move Key Policy Levers
    - Provide remediation as a co-requisite, not a prerequisite. Enrollment in gateway college-level courses should be the default placement for many more students.
    - Increase the number of students completing their degrees on time through greater intensity and credit accumulation.
    - Utilize block scheduling to help working students balance jobs and school, adding predictability to their busy lives.
    - Develop Guided Pathways to Success (GPS) for students to achieve degrees through highly structured academic plans.
    - Align financial investments in higher education to outcomes, not just enrollment. Use performance-based funding and financial aid policies to create the conditions for successful reform and incentivize student progression and success.

The governor and the Idaho State Board of Education have set an ambitious goal: that by 2020, 60 percent of Idahoans age 25–34 will have earned a postsecondary degree or certificate.

Following up on the CCA commitment, the governor and the Idaho State Board of Education have set an ambitious goal: that by 2020, 60 percent of Idahoans age 25–34 will have earned a postsecondary degree or certificate. Understanding that this goal represents a substantial increase over the baseline rate, the State Board brought together a statewide task force to develop the Complete College Idaho plan, which was released in June 2012.[24] Two of the key strategies set forth in the plan have particular relevance to this paper and are stated as follows:

1. Strengthen the Pipeline (ensure college and career readiness; develop intentional advising along the K-20 continuum that links education with careers; and support accelerating high school to postsecondary and career pathways)
2. Transform Remediation (including work to clarify and implement college- and career-readiness education and assessments)

THE STUDENT PIPELINE IN IDAHO

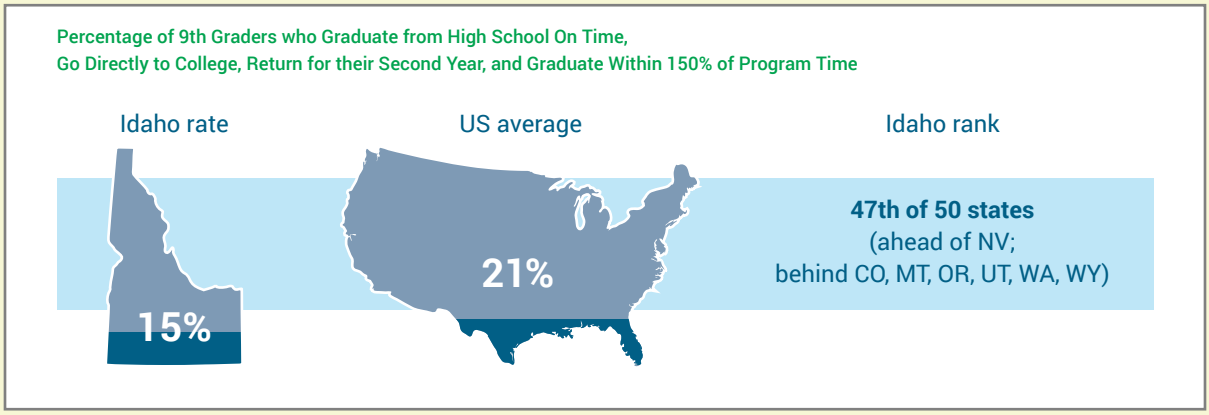
As described through data reported by the National Center for Higher Education Management Systems (NCHEMS)[25], the student pipeline in Idaho looks something like the following (also see **Figure 5**). For every hundred 9th graders in Idaho:

- 82 graduate from high school
- 37 enter college
- 23 are still enrolled their sophomore year
- 15 graduate within 150 percent of program time

NCHEMS data indicate that student-pipeline transition and completion rates trended slightly upward from 2000 to 2010. In Idaho, the movement was from 14 percent to 15 percent, while the U.S. average increased from 18 percent to 21 percent.

• Figure 5 •

THE STUDENT PIPELINE–TRANSITION AND COMPLETION RATES FROM 9TH GRADE TO COLLEGE (2010)



Source: NCES: Common Core Data, IPEDS Residency and Migration, Fall Enrollment and Graduation Rate Surveys. 2010. Retrieved from http://www.higheredinfo.org/dbrowser/index.php?submeasure=119&year=2010&level=nation&mode=graph&state=0.

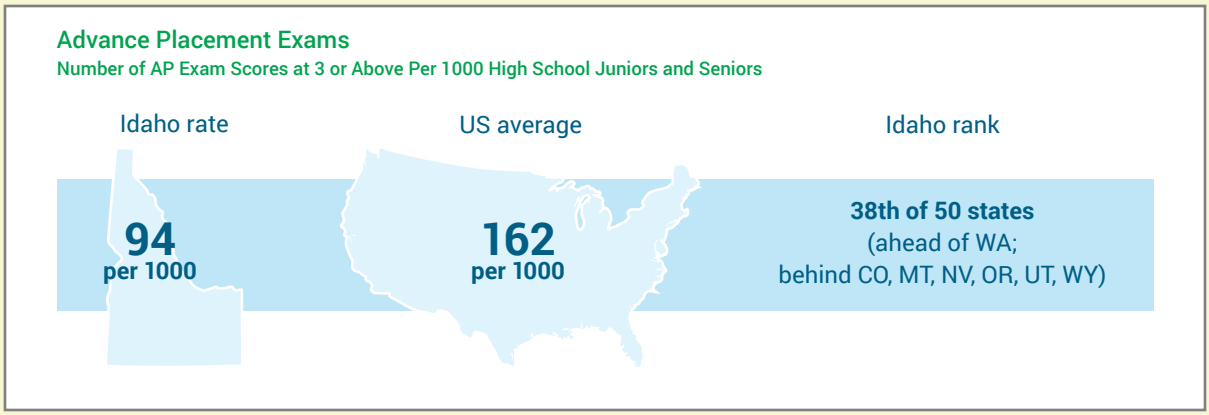
Proportion of enrollments in community colleges. In 2012–13, the percentage of undergraduate students enrolled in community colleges ranged from five percent in Alaska (with two community colleges and nine other colleges) to 72 percent in Wyoming (where there are seven community colleges and four other colleges). In Idaho, the percentage of undergraduates enrolled in community colleges is 27 percent, ranking the state 38th in the nation, whereas the national average is 42 percent. Comparisons to Idaho's neighboring states show these proportions of unduplicated annual undergraduate enrollments in community colleges: Colorado, 35 percent; Montana, 24 percent; Nevada, 11 percent; Utah, 19 percent; Washington, 48 percent; Wyoming, 72 percent.[26] These data raise the question of whether community colleges in Idaho are relatively underused and perhaps also unsupported in addressing the college participation and completion challenges of the state.

COLLEGE READINESS IN IDAHO

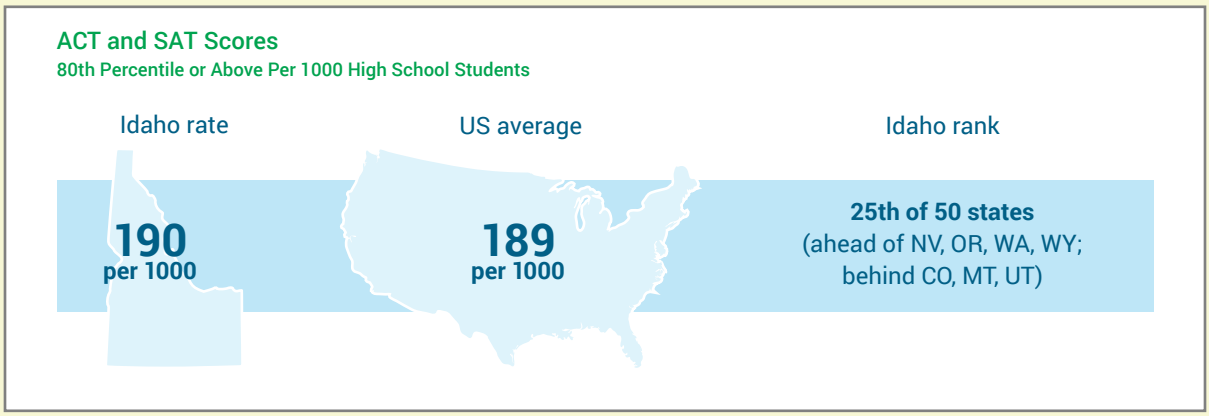
Among students entering Idaho community colleges for the first time in fall 2006, about 57 percent enrolled in a developmental course in English/reading, math (or both) during their first academic year.[27] That statistic includes 55 percent of community college students who entered directly from high school. Other indicators of college readiness in Idaho are presented in Figure 6, with indications that the state ranks 38th out of 50 states in terms of Advanced Placement Exam scores and 25th out of 50 states in terms of ACT or SAT scores at or above the 80th percentile.

• Figure 6 •

COLLEGE READINESS IN IDAHO



Source: The College Board. 2007.



Source: ACT, College Board. 2007.

As will be noted later in this paper, Idaho's community colleges are committed to a number of statewide and institution-based initiatives aimed at addressing the issues of college readiness, participation, and completion. There are promising results; yet college leaders, echoing the data, see the urgency of continuing and expanding efforts.

• OUTREACH TO STRENGTHEN COLLEGE READINESS AND PARTICIPATION •

For the remainder of this paper, the focus will be on the kinds of initiatives—some underway in Idaho and others showing results in other locations—that can promote college-going culture, development of academic readiness and college success skills, and stronger transitions from high school to college. Some of these initiatives are accomplished by community colleges working essentially on their own; many of them, however, involve comprehensive and committed partnerships with K–12 systems and their communities. Examples are limited to initiatives of two (sometimes overlapping) types: outreach approaches whereby community colleges collaborate with their K–12 systems to strengthen college-going culture, college participation, and high-school-to-college transitions; and pathway approaches that involve establishing clear, structured curricular pathways from high school to postsecondary credentials, usually with a variety of integrated academic and student supports.

Dual enrollment, while potentially a very important strategy for promoting college participation and completion, is not addressed here because it is the focus of a paper (forthcoming, 2015) authored by Brad Mitchell for the Rural Opportunities Consortium of Idaho.

SCALING ACCESS AND SUCCESS—LEE COLLEGE

Lee College, located in Baytown, Texas, is classified as an Associate's Public Suburban-Serving Multi-Campus Institution, enrolling approximately 8,765 credit students (unduplicated headcount). [Source: IPEDS (2012–2013)]. Lee is also designated as a Hispanic-Serving Institution (HSI).

Initiative Description. Creating a seamless pathway for students to transition from secondary to postsecondary education is a critical priority for Lee College. Concerned about the relatively low postsecondary enrollment rates of area high school students, Lee formed a partnership in 2012 with one area school district, Goose Creek Independent School District (GCISD). The demonstration project, called Student Success to the Core, is part of the college's involvement in the Houston Endowment-funded Gulf Coast Partners Achieving Student Success (GCPASS) program, which includes community colleges and partner school districts throughout the Houston Gulf Coast area. The goals of the Lee/CGISD partnership are to:

- Ensure that 100 percent of GCISD students complete compulsory steps required for college enrollment by the time they graduate high school;
- Increase college readiness and student success in developmental education and gateway courses; and
- Create a college-going culture in the Baytown community and beyond

While the primary partnership is between Lee and GCISD, program staff members indicate that the partnership extends community-wide, involving members of the local P-16 council and the Cradle to Career Network, with strong links to business and industry.

The activities of the project fall into three broad categories: Transitional Support, Parental Assimilation, and Career Exposure and Development.

1. **Transitional Support:** College and high school counselors, academic advisors, outreach specialists, and transition advisors work together to ensure that students complete all necessary steps to transition into college, including college and financial aid applications, assessment testing, onsite college visits, new student orientation, and registering for the first academic-term classes.

The college hosts Parent College workshops at regional locations throughout the service area, and presentations are delivered in both English and Spanish.

2. **Parental Assimilation:** Families are invited to visit Lee College to tour the campus and learn about programs. The college also hosts Parent College workshops at regional locations throughout the service area, and presentations are delivered in both English and Spanish. Workshops are conducted during daytime, evening, and weekend hours to create convenient and accessible scheduling for families.

3. **Career Exposure and Development:** College faculty lead students on career-cluster tours and participate in professional development with their high school counterparts, with whom they also work to align secondary and postsecondary outcomes in math, English, science, and social science.

Two aspects of this model are particularly notable. Lee provides transition advisors, specially trained advising staff members who work directly with students on the high school campuses. Another hallmark of the initiative is the intentional effort to employ only evidence-based practices, developed as part of Lee's work with GCPASS and also central to the college's work with the Center for Community College Student Engagement (CCCSE) and Achieving the Dream, a large, national community college reform network. To this end, leadership at GCISD agreed to make *all program activities mandatory for all students* regardless of their academic and career plans.

Program Impact. By providing students with wraparound support as they develop a degree plan and prepare to enter Lee College, this strategic alliance has already begun demonstrating increases in postsecondary participation.

- In fall 2014, Lee College experienced a 12.9 percent increase in enrollment from GCISD
- From 2012 to 2014, there has been a 530 percent increase in the number of GCISD students participating in dual-credit sections
- Participation in pre-college testing (SAT) increased from a baseline 471 graduates (2010–11) to 1,231 students in academic year 2013–14
- Successful course-completion rates (defined as grades of A, B, or C) for GCISD students enrolling in college-level English Composition increased by nine percent for college-ready students and two percent for students requiring remediation during 2013–14
- Successful course-completion rates (defined as grades of A, B, or C) for GCISD students enrolled in College Algebra increased as well: college-ready students experienced an increase from 47 percent in 2011 to 76 percent in 2014; for students needing remediation, course success rates increased by five percentage points during the same time period

Building upon the lessons learned from Student Success to the Core, Lee College has streamlined and improved processes to support students and is now planning to scale the initiative to seven school district partners. Lee is also working with the partnership to find ways to incentivize both dual enrollment and postsecondary enrollment directly from high school.

For more information on Lee College's GCPASS and Scaling Student Access and Success initiatives, contact Christy Ponce at cponce@lee.edu.

VIRGINIA CAREER COACH PROGRAM—STATEWIDE INITIATIVE

Initiative Description. In fall 2005, the Virginia Community College System (VCCS) initiated the Virginia Career Coach Program. The main purpose of the program is to empower high school students to make informed decisions about their career and educational plans, and to prepare students for success in postsecondary education and training.

The program is delivered by more than 130 career coaches—community college employees who are based in 180 local high schools. Coaches work in conjunction with high school counselors and advisors. They help students define their career aspirations and identify community college and other postsecondary programs, including apprenticeships and workforce training, that can help them achieve their educational and financial goals. The primary goal for each career coach is to increase the number and percentage of high school graduates who enter postsecondary education or workforce training prepared for success.

Career coaches target students most in need of career planning services. These students–sometimes referred to as the "middle majority"–are often the least likely to receive direct services because they are not designated as "clearly college bound;" they also may not receive other types of support services that are based on identified academic need.

Career coaches target students most in need of career planning services. These students—sometimes referred to as the "middle majority"—are often the least likely to receive direct services because they are not designated as "clearly college bound;" they also may not receive other types of support services that are based on identified academic need. Frequently, these students graduate from high school without clearly identified career goals or postsecondary education plans.

The main activities in the career coaching process, serving students individually and in small groups, are as follows:

- Connecting with students through classroom presentations, club meetings, assemblies, referrals, walk-ins, etc.
- Assisting students with completion of the college Student Intake Form, administering a career assessment, and supporting students' development of an Individual Academic and Career Plan (IACP)
- Developing the student's IACP over time, with a particular effort to match interests, skills, and work values with potential career and educational pathways
- Offering connections to secondary and postsecondary education and training opportunities, including career and technical education programs, technical schools, community colleges, and universities. Some students take advantage of work-based learning and other business and industry connections

In summary, the career coach provides support and encouragement to help students navigate the complexity of making informed career and educational choices.

Program Impact. Data from the 2013 Student Survey of Career Coaching (based on 4,745 students from 165 Virginia high schools) indicate:

- Almost all student respondents (92 percent) view their coach as valuable, and a large majority (73 percent) see their coach as very/extremely valuable
- Because of their experience with career coaches, nearly all students (94 percent) indicate some change in plans regarding college, careers, or jobs
- Nearly half of students say that because of the coaching, they are more likely to attend a community college (48 percent) and/or more likely to attend a four-year school (46 percent). Many students (42 percent) indicate that they were more likely to have a career that matches their goals due to working with the career coach
- Seventy percent of student respondents indicate that they completed a written IACP; among those who completed the plan, nearly all (88 percent) view it as valuable

Based on these data, as well as on increases in dual and postsecondary enrollments, the Virginia Career Coaching model continues to expand and serves as a model for other states.

To learn more about Virginia's Career Coaching program, contact Scott Kemp at skemp@vccs.edu.

• BUILDING HIGH SCHOOL-TO-COLLEGE PATHWAYS •

DUAL2DEGREE PATHWAY—SOUTH TEXAS COLLEGE

South Texas College (STC), located in McAllen, Texas, is classified as a Public four-year, primarily Associate's Institution serving approximately 40,000 credit students (unduplicated headcount). [Source: IPEDS (2012–2013)].

Initiative Description. South Texas College's Dual2Degree pathway encompasses multiple initiatives, programs, and activities, all in support of transitioning dual-enrollment students from high school to STC. It leads Texas in providing dual enrollment for high school students, serving more than 13,000. STC partners with numerous area high schools, middle schools, and elementary schools to aggressively promote a college-going culture through dual-enrollment courses and academies, stackable credentials, dropout-recovery programs, early-college high schools, and college enrollment initiatives.

Dual-enrollment students have the opportunity to earn stackable credentials leading to a baccalaureate at STC (See **Figure 7**). In 2004, the Texas Legislature established a pilot program authorizing South Texas College to offer bachelor's degrees in applied science (BAS) and applied technology (BAT). Out of the current South Texas BAS/BAT graduates, 16 percent had previously earned dual-enrollment credit.

Since 2005, South Texas College has offered Dual Enrollment Academies, which allow high school students to earn an associate degree while completing their high school graduation requirements. The academies are two-year programs for high school juniors interested in pursuing careers in health care, engineering, computer science, or criminal justice. Students who complete the program earn an Associate of Science degree in biology, engineering,

computer science, or criminal justice by the end of their senior year in high school. Additionally, STC hosts 26 Early College High Schools (ECHS), more than any other ECHS program in the nation.

STC activities designed to support the transition of dual-enrollment high school students to the college include mandatory dual-enrollment orientation, parent initiatives, academic advising, financial aid workshops, student success modules, and college application drives.

• Figure 7 •

BUILDING A PATHWAY TO THE BACCALAUREATE

Dual Enrollment, Stackable Credentials, Competency-Based Learning

DUAL ENROLLMENT
- Developmental Education

STACKABLE DEGREES
- Marketable Skills
- Certificates
- Associate

BACCALAUREATE
- Applied Technology
- Applied Science–Competency Based

Example Pathway

High School to Baccalaureate Degree

High School Endorsement	STC Certificate Program Earned in High School	STC Associate Degree Options	STC Baccalaureate Degree Options
Business & Industry • Business Programs • Technology	• Computer Applications Specialist • Computer & Internet Specialist • Multimedia Specialist • Precision Manufacturing	• Business Computer Systems AAS • Electronic & Computer Maintenance AAS • Precision Manufacturing AAS	• BAT in Technology Management • BAT in Computer & Information Technologies • BAS in Organizational Leadership

Source: South Texas College (2015)

Program Impact. One of the major objectives of the dual-enrollment program at STC is to assist students who have earned dual credit in transitioning to STC in completing their degrees. Data indicate that the number of dual-enrollment students who enroll at South Texas College after graduating from high school has increased substantially since the fall 2002 semester. In fall 2014, out of 4,608 first-time-in-college (FTIC) students who enrolled at STC, 2,058 had prior dual-enrollment credit, compared to just 149 out of 1,890 graduates in 2002. The overall dual-enrollment-student success rate for fall 2013 (successful college course completion with grades A, B, or C) was 87.6 percent, compared to the STC traditional-student success rate of 70.2 percent. On average, STC's dual-enrollment students have a 17.4 percent higher successful course completion rate as compared to its traditional students.

STC's Early College High Schools have significantly increased the number of college credit hours earned and associate degrees awarded among the program's graduates. Of the 764 ECHS graduates in 2014, 97 percent (755 students) earned at least 12 college credit hours; 44 percent (334 students) also earned an associate degree by the time of high school graduation.

To learn more about the Dual2Degree pathway program, contact Kristina Wilson at kmwilson@southtexascollege.edu.

LONG BEACH COLLEGE PROMISE—LONG BEACH CITY COLLEGE

Long Beach City College (LBCC), located in Long Beach, California, is classified as a Public Multi-campus Urban-Serving two year institution enrolling approximately 31,000 credit students (unduplicated headcount). [Source: IPEDS (2012-2013)].

Focused on improving three key student experiences—college preparation, college access, and college success—the College Promise provides a free semester of tuition at LBCC, guaranteed admission to CSULB, early outreach, and intensive support.

Initiative Description. The Long Beach College Promise is designed to improve college preparation, access, and completion for members of the greater Long Beach community. The initiative began in 2008 when leaders from the Long Beach Unified School District (LBUSD), Long Beach City College, and California State University, Long Beach (CSULB) came together to help local students prepare for, enter, and succeed in postsecondary education. Focused on improving three key student experiences—college preparation, college access, and college success—the College Promise provides a free semester of tuition at LBCC, guaranteed admission to CSULB, early outreach, and intensive support.

Long Beach City College's primary effort in support of the Long Beach College Promise is known as the Promise Pathways initiative. LBCC implemented a number of innovations to help meet the goals of the Long Beach College Promise, including alternative course placement and first semester success plans with registration priority. Participating students are placed in English and math courses based broadly on their high school achievement (e.g., GPA, last course, and grade in discipline) rather than traditional standardized placement tests. Pathways students are also required to enroll full time and to complete key foundational courses beginning in their first semester. LBCC provides tuition support for students in their first term to assist them in attending full time.

Program Impact. In 2014, the Long Beach College Promise collaboration published *A Breakthrough in Student Achievement*, detailing outcomes from the Promise's first five years. Highlights of significant improvements in enrollment, completion, and transfer include:

- The number of transfer-level English courses completed by local high school graduates increased. Between 2011 and 2012, completions increased from just over 50 students to 350, representing a sevenfold increase in one year.
- The number of transfer-level math course completions also steadily increased during the first five years. Data from 2012 indicate that more than twice as many students (slightly more than 100) completed college-level math, as compared to fewer than 50 in 2011.
- Success rates for every demographic group enrolled in Promise Pathways increased, and some of the largest relative gains were made by Latino and African American students.
- The number of CSULB freshmen enrolling directly from LBUSD increased from 519 in fall 2008 to 743 in fall 2012, representing an increase of 43 percent.
- In fall 2012, LBCC transfer students gained admission at a rate 18 percent higher than that of students from any other community college.
- While the numbers of enrolling freshmen has grown, the percentage of students requiring math and English remediation has decreased.

The Long Beach Promise renewed and expanded its commitment in 2014. Among the group's goals is a commitment to closing the achievement gaps—at all levels of education—that exist among racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic groups.

For more information about the Long Beach College Promise, contact Judy Seal at jseal@lbschools.net.

NORTH CAROLINA'S CAREER AND COLLEGE PROMISE—A STATEWIDE INITIATIVE

Initiative Description. Established in 2012, the North Carolina Career and College Promise program offers structured opportunities for qualified high school students to enroll in community college courses that provide pathways leading to a certificate, diploma, or degree and also build entry-level job skills. Career and College Promise offers North Carolina high school students a clear path to success in college or in a career. The program is free to all students who maintain a B average and meet other eligibility requirements. Through a partnership involving the Department of Public Instruction, the North Carolina Community College System, the University of North Carolina system, and many independent colleges and universities, the state is helping eligible high school students begin earning college credit at a community college campus, at no cost to them or their families. The three pathways include:

1. College Transfer Pathways (CTP), which require the completion of at least 30 semester hours of transfer courses including English and mathematics
2. Career and Technical Education Pathways (CTE), which lead to a certificate or diploma aligned with a high school career cluster
3. Cooperative Innovative High School Programs (CIHSP), located on college campuses and providing opportunities for students to complete an associate degree program or earn up to two years of college credit within five years; examples include Early and Middle College High Schools

A rural college example of the North Carolina Career and College Promise initiative is briefly described below.

CENTRAL CAROLINA WORKS—ONE COMMUNITY COLLEGE'S RESPONSE TO THE NORTH CAROLINA CAREER AND COLLEGE PROMISE

Central Carolina Community College (CCCC), located in Sanford, North Carolina., is classified as a two-year Public Rural-Serving Institution serving approximately 6,500 credit students (unduplicated headcount). [Source: IPEDS (2012-2013)].

Initiative Description. Central Carolina Works (CCW) is a collaborative initiative among the three local K–12 education agencies served by Central Carolina Community College (CCCC), the college administration and faculty, and the business communities of three service-area counties. The project aims to increase dual-enrollment participation while simultaneously

building capacity for faculty, administration, and teachers to guide students and their families through the full range of educational and career pathways—both Career and Technical Education (CTE) and College Transfer (CT).

Initiated in 2014, CCW employs an individualized advising model that includes nine full-time career and college advisors stationed on-site at each area high school. In addition to providing outreach and advising services to the more than 11,000 area high school students, these advisors serve as primary coordinators of a sustained professional development program that connects schools and classrooms with local business and industry. CCW is also focused on the development of CTE pathways that allow students the opportunity for pathway completion of certificates and diplomas while enrolled in high school.

Career and College Advisors use an intrusive advising model guided by an appreciative advising approach. The intrusive advising process is supported by the college's online early alert/academic planning system, which provides real-time grade and attendance alerts for students who fall below certain performance thresholds at key times during the semester. Advisors provide immediate follow-up and intervention with students as necessary and log notes, using the online academic planning system. Thus they create a continuous, informed advising process for high school students who go on to postsecondary education full time at Central Carolina upon graduation from high school. Advisors are trained on the appreciative advising approach, which empowers them to practice advising by asking positive, open-ended questions that help students optimize their educational experiences.

Program Impact. CCW is in the pilot stage (2014–2015) of implementation. Two lead advisors were hired in spring 2014, and the remaining seven advisors came on board in July 2014. All advisors began reporting to their assigned high schools in August 2014. Even during the first year of implementation, CCW is producing promising results. Before implementation of CCW, Central Carolina Community College typically had 200-250 area high school students enrolled in college courses. By spring 2015, 592 students were taking part in dual enrollment. Among the 592 students, 216 (36 percent) were enrolled in the College Transfer (CT) pathway and 376 (64 percent) were enrolled in a Career and Technical Education (CTE) pathway.

Pathway development is another important focus of CCW as the work continues. Additional CTE pathways have recently been added, including Accounting, Culinary Arts, Laser and Photonics, Library Information Technology, Nurse Aide, and Telecommunications Installation and Maintenance. CCW is committed to providing students increasing opportunities that lead to certificate completion.

To learn more about the North Carolina Career and College Promise, contact Lisa Eads at eadsl@nccommunitycolleges.edu. To learn more about Central Carolina Works, contact Virginia Brown at vbrown@cccc.edu.

CREATING PLASTICS TECHNOLOGY CAREER PATHWAYS IN RURAL MICHIGAN—MID MICHIGAN COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Mid Michigan Community College (MMCC), located in Harrison, Michigan, is classified as a Public Rural-Serving Institution serving approximately 6,500 credit students (unduplicated headcount). [Source: IPEDS (2012-2013)].

Initiative Description. In 2012, Mid Michigan Community College (MMCC) responded to local employers' requests for better-skilled workers by developing Creating Plastics Technology Career Pathways in Rural Michigan. Funded by a three-year NSF grant, the overarching program goal is to encourage students to explore STEM fields and to specifically provide a foundation for pursuing employment in the plastics technology industry.

The initiative has three main objectives:

- To formalize the advisory role of regional plastics industry leaders
- To develop curriculum for plastics technician training
- To increase recruitment and retention of students in plastics engineering technology and plastics-related industries

Program leaders cite community support as the critical component for the initiative's success.

Program leaders cite community support as the critical component for the initiative's success; even competing area thermoforming equipment manufacturers are working together on the advisory committee, participating in curriculum design, making material and equipment donations, and providing internship opportunities for all credit students between their first and second years.

Program Impact. To date, the program is on target to achieve the objectives set out in the NSF application—and is building a plan for sustainability beyond grant funding.

Major milestones in the work include the following:

- As a result of the program, the Plastics Alliance of Mid Michigan became a formalized entity to provide various supports as well as opportunities for leveraging alternative funding. Information regarding the Alliance, including membership, committees, and job shadowing and internships, is available on the MMCC website at https://www.midmich.edu/?gid=2&sid=267&pid=3508.
- The group came together to create a laddered educational program from college entry through transfer to a four-year institution. The laddered approach provides several options, including short-term training (non-credit rapid-response programs that provide entry-level training in welding, computer numeric controls, and advanced manufacturing). Students then have the opportunity to articulate courses into the Certificate of Achievement in Plastics Engineering Technology or the Associate of Applied Science in Plastics Engineering Technology. The associate degree program offers a range of courses that give students a strong basic understanding of plastics, and leads into more advanced topics of study. Students can enter and exit the program in accordance with their individual educational and career goals. Those interested in transferring to a four-year institution may pursue a bachelor's degree in Plastics Engineering Technology at Ferris State University.

While the initiative currently focuses on college-level students, leaders indicate they have plans to develop programs in conjunction with the Clare-Gladwin Regional Educational Service District. They believe that by reaching students at an earlier age, they can foster an interest in the plastics field while at the same time helping the region to build a more stable and well-educated workforce. To ensure future sustainability, MMCC and its partners are staying focused on current employer needs, partnering with the Society of Plastics Engineers and the Society of the Plastics Industry and also embarking on an information and marketing campaign that includes hiring a designated program recruiter. MMCC leaders also hope to offer this training to other parts of Michigan and beyond by working with additional regional and state development agencies.

To learn more about the Plastics Technology Career Pathways in Rural Michigan, contact Steven Fosgard at sfosgard@midmich.edu.

• WORK UNDERWAY IN IDAHO: SELECTED EXAMPLES •

The programmatic initiatives and commitment of Idaho's community colleges cannot be adequately represented in this paper. Thus, this section offers but a small sample of the types of work that hold promise for improving college readiness, participation, and success.

GO ON SCHOOLS (IDAHO STATEWIDE INITIATIVE)

Initiative Description. Go On Schools is in the final year (2014–2015) of a three-year initiative supported by the J.A. and Kathryn Albertson Family Foundation. The overall mission is to equip schools and their communities to support, counsel, guide, and/or mentor all students in pursuit of some type of postsecondary education.

Adopted by 21 Idaho schools with 12,365 students, the Go On Schools initiative is built upon four tenets:

- **Aim High:** Set high expectations (academically and otherwise) for students; then provide the support and extra help they need when challenged.
- **Make a Plan:** With support and guidance from schools, the community, and parents, help students develop, track, and update a plan for how they will prepare for education after high school.
- **Get Ready:** Getting ready to Go On includes financial aid and scholarship education, campus visits, and exposure to college and career experiences.
- **Go On:** Encourage students to take rigorous courses, college assessments, and tech-prep, Advanced Placement, and dual-credit classes.

To support the mission, promising practices developed through Go On Schools have included:

- Use of student Go On Ambassadors in providing mentoring and tutoring to other students
- Increased school-sponsored college visits
- Introduction of the Strive for College virtual college mentoring program
- Collaboration with colleges in sponsoring a College Application Week and FAFSA Nights
- Introduction of Go On Parent Newsletters
- Integration of college and career exploration into meaningful advisory classes
- Integration of college and career planning into the high school senior project
- Increased dual-credit and Advanced Placement courses that give students a jump start on college
- Increased opportunities for internships and job shadowing that give students real world connections to possible careers

Program Impact. High schools were asked to track key postsecondary access and success indicators such as FAFSA completion, college application completion, dual credits earned, postsecondary enrollment, PSAT/SAT completion, and college remediation rates. Selected data highlights from participating schools include the following:

- The percentage of seniors completing the FAFSA rose from 50.9 percent in 2012–13 to 56.9 percent in 2013–14
- The percentage of seniors completing college applications increased from 67 percent in the 2012–13 school year to 80 percent in the 2013–14 school year across all Go On high schools
- PSAT completion for sophomores and juniors increased from 25 percent in 2012–13 to 52 percent in 2013–14
- The number of dual credits earned among all Go On high schools increased from 5,895 in the 2012–13 school year to 7,840 in the 2013–14 school year, a 33 percent increase
- The number of Advanced Placement exams taken by students in Go On Schools increased by 36 percent in 2013–14 in comparison to 2012–13

Postsecondary enrollment rates immediately after high school and within one year increased among the Go On high school cohort each year from 2011 to 2013, while rates across the state dropped.

- Postsecondary enrollment rates immediately after high school and within one year increased among the Go On high school cohort each year from 2011 to 2013, while rates across the state dropped
- Postsecondary remediation required for students entering college dropped from 36.5 percent for the class of 2012 to 21 percent for the class of 2013

For more information on Go On Schools, contact Rob King, Go On Schools Consultant, at Robertk391@aol.com or Blossom Johnston, J.A. and Kathryn Albertson Family Foundation program officer, at bjohnston@jkaf.org.

THE VILLAGE PROJECT—NORTH IDAHO COLLEGE

Initiative Description. The Village Project (formerly I-BEST) at North Idaho College (NIC) is in its inaugural year, though the initiative builds on a multi-year demonstration project. During the demonstration period, the college targeted 75 students who had dropped out of high school. Project coordinators and volunteers helped students to obtain GEDs and enroll in college classes. The model makes use of a number of evidenced-based practices, through which participating students:

- are connected with a learning community—a village—of peers who are enrolled in the same series of classes taught by instructors specially selected for NIC's Village Project;
- participate in classes designed to teach them both academic and life skills that help them reach their goals;
- benefit from a peer mentor who can offer help, support, and knowledge of NIC resources to promote student success;
- are assigned an advisor who is engaged in their academic success, intervening at the earliest possible point to support students with their needs for academic and/or personal issues; and
- receive extra help with all the processes of going to college.

Each student is assigned a peer (student) advisor and an intrusive (staff) advisor. The intrusive advisors are campus volunteers who "step up" to perform this role in addition to their usual assigned duties. Intrusive advisors regularly engage with program students, working to form relationships early in the orientation process so that no time is lost when a student matriculates. When students miss a class, fail a test, or otherwise exhibit signs of academic struggle, the early alert system is activated and the intrusive advisor intervenes to help the student get back on track. The intrusive advisors sit in on classes at times, provide midterm feedback beyond the grades given by faculty, and assist students with any issues that may prevent optimal academic outcomes.

The college success class integrates curriculum around non-cognitive variables, particularly grit skills. Students learn the meaning and power of a cohort, along with a heightened understanding of community; they are encouraged to take responsibility for themselves and one another. Program participants develop an educational and career plan in the college success class and learn the steps necessary to complete their goals.

While initially given less than a five percent chance of persistence, participating students persisted at a rate of 86 percent. They earned more credits and achieved higher GPAs than their counterparts.

Program Impact. Students who took part in the demonstration (pilot phase) of the project were able to persist and complete at a higher rate than other similar populations. While initially given less than a five percent chance of persistence, participating students persisted at a rate of 86 percent. They earned more credits and achieved higher GPAs than their counterparts.

North Idaho College is now applying the evidence-based practices and lessons learned from the first phase of the project to the college's general population. The current target includes students with a high school diploma or GED, but who are still considered underprepared for college-level work. The theme for the Village Project is "Redefining Engagement." NIC plans to serve more than 500 students through January 2016 by engaging with students at the level at which they arrive. The North Idaho College Village Project is part of the Continuous Enrollment Initiative and operates with funding from the J.A. and Kathryn Albertson Family Foundation.

For more information on the Village Project, contact Molly Kreyssler at mckreyssler@nic.edu.

THE IDAHO PTECH NETWORK

Initiative Description. Funded as a pilot program by the J.A. and Kathryn Albertson Family Foundation, the Idaho PTECH Network seeks to "bridge the gap between education and industry by providing students with the credentials and skills needed to secure well-paying jobs in Idaho's high-growth industries while giving businesses access to a qualified pipeline of employees."[28] According to the network website, the work has expanded to include 16 high schools, North Idaho College, College of Southern Idaho, and Lewis and Clark College, along with other partners including Inside Track and Idaho Digital Learning.

The PTECH model calls for provision of a variety of resources and supports as students navigate three major transitions: choosing an educational and career path in grades 9 and 10; staying on a path to college in grades 11 and 12, through high school and community college courses and with online guidance and support from a PTECH advisor; and getting a job—an outcome of relevant community college programs, continued advising, and connection to career options.

Students benefit from virtual mentoring and coaching, site facilitation at their local high school, and a network of support to help them navigate college processes, complete college early, and connect with industry partners looking for their skill set.

College Example: The North Idaho College PTECH Implementation. In spring 2013, NIC partnered with IDEA and Forest Bird Charter School in a grant proposal to the J.A. and Kathryn Albertson Family Foundation that outlined a strategy for providing early access for high school students to information technology and aerospace professional/technical pathways. The collaborative proposal, called PTECH (Professional Technical Early College to High School) was, as noted above, funded for a pilot phase. NIC now provides high school students participating through PTECH with a full menu of health care, IT, and aerospace courses. Students benefit from virtual mentoring and coaching, site facilitation at their local high school, and a network of support to help them navigate college processes, complete college early, and connect with industry partners looking for their skill set. NIC and PTECH staff members meet every other week to discuss obstacles, successes, and next steps.

NIC also operates three Outreach Centers in very rural communities. Among other functions, the Outreach Centers support the PTECH initiative by providing student services and support to high school students as they navigate their professional/technical and general education courses.

For more information, contact Alan Millar, PTECH Executive Director, at alan@idahoptech.org, or Kassie Silvas, NIC Dean of Outreach and Educational Innovation, at kmsilvas@nic.edu.

STUDENT SUCCESS INITIATIVE—COLLEGE OF SOUTHERN IDAHO

As will be emphasized in a subsequent section, the work of community colleges only begins with promoting access and college participation. The nationwide emphasis on community college student success is reflected in many ways across Idaho's community colleges. Here is but one example.

Initiative Description. The College of Southern Idaho describes its aspirations and strategies for strengthening student success in terms of vision, goals, design framework, guiding principles, and institutional practice, as reflected in a college document quoted below:[29]

Vision

College of Southern Idaho students are faced with varied and individually unique obstacles that stand in the way of their specific goals. Not only is the College tasked with the education of our students, but we are collectively entrusted to do right by these same students, to make the provisions necessary to support—if not ensure—their individual success.

All organizational units and each employee have a role to play in this commitment. It is not someone else's job, it is every employee's primary responsibility, no matter the title or the job description. The College then undertakes to create and maintain a culture of student success that is central to decision-making and resource allocation, whether human, physical, or financial.

Goals

- A culture of student success at every level of the CSI organization that is communicated to and understood by all CSI employees
- Coordination of student success efforts to identify specific issues, prioritize them, and develop appropriate solutions
- Continuous improvement of the metrics selected and applied to measure student success

Design Framework

Recruiting → Connection → Entry → Progress → Completion → Outcomes

The basis for the initiative lies in the goals stated above, the *Completion by Design Loss and Momentum Framework*, and guiding principles. The Loss and Momentum Framework provides a blueprint for strategies, interventions, and milestones along the continuum of the student experience, which is described in four stages of the student success pathway: Connection, Entry, Progress, and Completion. CSI adds bookend stages to this framework: Recruiting and Outcomes.

Loss points and issues are identified at each stage of the continuum, and momentum strategies/solutions selected to address each. While individual efforts are expected, the greater expectation is that system-wide solutions are identified, implemented, and measured on a coordinated basis.

Milestones are established as checkpoints for student progress and must be closely monitored using both human and technology resources.

Loss points, strategies, and milestones are identified and selected based on specific student groups, for example:

- First-time college students
- Degree seekers
- Non-degree seekers
- Dual credit

Guiding Principles

The following Guiding Principles represent an explicit commitment by the college administration and provide guidance for decision-making and establish priorities for action. These principles are adapted from *Completion by Design Pathway Principles* and the work of Dr. Terry O'Banion.[30] These principles are to be augmented with specific momentum strategies as described in the Design Framework section above.

1. Create, maintain, and mandate student engagement with CSI personnel
2. Accelerate entry into coherent programs of study
3. Minimize time required to get college-ready

4. Ensure students know requirements to succeed
5. Customize and contextualize instruction
6. Integrate student supports with instruction
7. Continually monitor student progress and proactively provide feedback
8. Reward behaviors that contribute to completion
9. Leverage technology to improve learning, program delivery, and services

Institutional Practice

The implementation of the Student Success Initiative requires attention to policy, procedure, and practice.

- The president and his administrative team will champion the Student Success Initiative and commit to rally a critical mass of faculty and staff to undertake both the momentum strategies and cultural revolution.
- All decisions regarding policies, programs, practices, processes, and personnel will be based on evidence to the extent it is possible to do so.
- The college will commit to realigning current resources and identify potential new resources to support the goals of the Student Success Initiative.

• AFTER ACCESS, THEN SUCCESS •

As Idaho's community college leaders and policymakers clearly understand, however, increasing college access and participation is only the first step; access without success is an empty promise.

Throughout this paper, emphasis is intentionally placed on the work of building a college-going culture, strengthening readiness for college among high school graduates, and increasing college participation. As Idaho's community college leaders and policymakers clearly understand, however, increasing college access and participation is only the first step; access without success is an empty promise. Thus, along with continuing and escalated efforts to promote participation, the state's community colleges are engaged in a wide array of within-institution student success initiatives—some supported by state and philanthropic efforts, including Complete College Idaho.

More than a decade of intensive work across the country on improving community college student outcomes has produced many lessons. Perhaps the most important is the recognition that discrete (and typically small-scale) programmatic interventions will not produce the desired gains in college completion and equity. Rather, the necessary evidence-based redesign of students' experiences has to be done in the broader context of transformational change in institutions and in the policy conditions within which they work. In other words, the solutions must be systemic, involving the will and capacity for change across multiple constituencies: K–12 systems, community colleges, universities, business and industry, state policymakers, and community leaders.

Fortunately, there exist increasing examples of these multiparty efforts to produce systemic change. Two such examples, describing quite different college-initiated and policy-driven approaches, are briefly described below.

ADVANCED MANUFACTURING TRAINING INITIATIVE—BRIDGING THE SKILLS GAP IN NEW JERSEY

In 2004, New Jersey's 19 community college presidents authorized the establishment of coordinated workforce training solutions that capitalize on the collective expertise and other resources of the state's community colleges. The agreement specifically empowered the New Jersey Community College Consortium for Workforce and Economic Development to initiate statewide workforce training programs, using funding from a variety of sources, with the central mission of recruiting, training, and certifying workers for New Jersey manufacturers.[31] Over a decade, the Consortium's training programs have involved more than 100,000 employees and over 5,400 businesses.

Key Consortium partners include the New Jersey Department of Labor and Workforce Development, a major funder of the work, and business groups such as the New Jersey Business & Industry Association, which facilitated extensive outreach to the employer community.

Launched in 2012, the Consortium's Advanced Manufacturing Training Initiative provides on-demand training solutions for manufacturing companies. Through this program, previously unemployed individuals have been trained—many of them earning national certifications—in metal fabrication, CNC machining, and production technology. Initially, training was provided through classes held at four community colleges and two technical institutes. According to the Consortium, local manufacturers have employed 90 percent of program graduates at competitive wages.

A notable feature of the Consortium's work, especially for rural settings and for high-cost training programs, is the addition of mobile training classrooms.

A notable feature of the Consortium's work, especially for rural settings and for high-cost training programs, is the addition of mobile training classrooms. The first mobile classroom, acquired by Camden County College through a federal grant, is designed to train unemployed students in high-demand skills of metal fabrication and mechatronics. The sophisticated trailer, fitted with a 384-square-foot classroom, has hands-on training equipment and computer stations for students.

MARYLAND'S COLLEGE AND CAREER READINESS AND COLLEGE COMPLETION ACT OF 2013

Recent state legislation in Maryland is notable for its comprehensive approach. Incorporated into state policy is the recognition that K–12 systems, community colleges, and universities, along with state policymakers, must engage in concerted and coordinated action to significantly strengthen college and career readiness, as well as college completion, among current and future students across the state.[32]

The national higher education online news outlet, *Inside Higher Ed*, provided a useful summary of the key elements of the Maryland legislation (see below).[33]

• Sidebar •

DETAILS ON MARYLAND'S COLLEGE AND CAREER READINESS AND COLLEGE COMPLETION ACT OF 2013

New Goals. The legislation sets a goal for at least 55 percent of Marylanders between the ages of 25 and 64 to hold at least an associate degree by 2025. It also seeks for all degree-seeking students who are enrolled at a community college in the state to earn an associate degree before leaving the college or transferring to a public four-year institution.

Reverse Transfer Agreement. The commission must also create a statewide reverse transfer agreement by July 2016 through which at least 30 credits that a student earns toward a bachelor's degree at any public, four-year institution in the state are transferrable to an community college in the state for credit toward an associate degree.

Degree Plan. Each undergraduate student enrolled in a public, four-year institution must file a degree plan charting a pathway to completion with the institution before earning 45 credits. Students who transfer in with at least 45 credits must submit the plan during their first semester. The plans must be developed in consultation with an academic advisor in the student's degree program, if such an advisor is available.

Standard Number of Credit Hours. The law sets the standard number of credits for a bachelor's degree at 120. And beginning in 2015, the standard number of credits for an associate degree will be 60. However, there are exceptions to these standards, which colleges can also add to in consultation with the commission.

High School Curriculum and Graduation Requirements. By 2015 the State Board of Education will require that students at all public schools must be assessed for college readiness in English and mathematics before their senior year. Beginning with the following year, community colleges and local school systems must create "transition courses" for high school seniors who are not deemed college-ready.

Statewide Transfer Agreement. By July 2016 the Maryland Higher Education Commission, in collaboration with public institutions, must develop a statewide transfer agreement through which at least 60 credits of general education, elective, and major courses that a student earns toward a degree at any Maryland community college must be transferrable for credit toward a bachelor's degree at any public, four-year institution in the state.

Completion Incentives. The commission and each public institution must create incentives for students to obtain an associate degree before enrolling in a public, four-year institution. They must also create a statewide communications campaign to identify near-completers—students who have earned at least 45 credits at a community college or at least 90 credits at a four-year institution—and offer incentives for them to re-enroll and earn a degree.

Pathways to a Degree. Each public institution must develop a pathway system that includes graduation progress benchmarks. The benchmarks must specify the credit and course criteria that indicate satisfactory progress to a degree. They must also require each first-time, degree-seeking student to include credit-bearing mathematics and English courses during their first 24 earned credits. Students who are danger of falling behind will be required to consult with an academic advisor.

Dual Enrollment. A public institution may not charge tuition to a student who is dually enrolled in a public, K–12 school. Local school districts must pick up large portions of the price for up to four college courses in which the student is enrolled.

College and Career Counseling Plan. The Maryland State Department of Education must work with public colleges and universities to develop a plan to improve college and career counseling for students in middle and high schools.

• RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IDAHO •

Following review of national literature and Idaho data, and with an understanding both of community colleges nationally and of extensive work underway in Idaho's community colleges, several recommendations are offered below. The strategies are focused on building college-going culture, improving college readiness among high school students, increasing the college participation rate in the state, and building strong high-school-to-college transitions.

It is important to note that there are examples within Idaho of efforts related to these recommendations. Thus, the recommendations may constructively serve to reinforce evidence-based initiatives, to encourage resource allocation to scale up effective programs that currently serve only small numbers of students, and/or to promote implementation of more robust and integrated student and academic supports. An important commitment, therefore, would be to examine the impacts of the work underway and to support moving high-impact initiatives to much greater scale, both within individual colleges and across the state.

1 Idaho community colleges have substantial and growing dual-enrollment programs for high school students. The growth will likely be accelerated by the state's Fast Forward program, which provides high school juniors and seniors with financial incentives for dual enrollment. In instances where the programs consist primarily of course-taking, evidence suggests that post-high-school participation and success in college can be substantially promoted by building in *mandatory* support activities—including, for example, dual-enrollment orientation; parent engagement; student success courses or curriculum modules; completion of college and financial aid applications; early assessment of academic readiness for college

(no later than junior year), followed by appropriate skill-building classes (or intensive workshops) in the senior year; academic and career planning; college visits; cohort-based activities; and enrollment in courses for the first semester at the college.

2 With some local and regional variation, dual-enrollment high school students often are those who are more inclined toward college participation than may be the case for their peers. Thus, community colleges must focus efforts on the populations typically less likely to be college-bound, a large subset of the 55 percent of high school graduates who do not enroll directly in college following high school. Those students will require all of the supports noted in Recommendation 1, and others as well, through collaborative *school-wide* programs. The expanded dual-enrollment population fostered by the Fast Forward program will very likely have a particularly high need for these supports.

3 Advising (including both academic and career planning) in high schools and colleges should provide prospective and current college students with data-informed scenarios about career pathways, opportunities for employment in specific fields (in Idaho and elsewhere), projected earnings (at entry level and beyond), and the levels of educational attainment associated with high employment and high wages. This intensive advising can be conducted with groups of students and/or in the context of required college orientation or student success courses (both in high school and in community college settings). In addition, there are expanding options for software that can be invaluable in supporting the human advising functions.

4 Strong consideration should be given to the further development in Idaho of models that place community college success coaches/college and career coaches/pathway advisors on-site in service-area high schools, with specific assignments to provide the kinds of activities and supports described above.

5 Consistent with leading-edge community college work across the country (and with recommendations from Complete College America), community colleges should be supported in work to design clear, coherent, and structured academic and career pathways for students—pathways that explicitly lead to transfer and/or careers providing family-supporting wages. Whenever possible, the pathways should incorporate stacked credentials that are carefully linked to regional labor markets.

6 The community college pathways should ultimately be extended into high schools through intensive collaboration with K–12 systems—with particular attention to Common Core standards alignment. This effort is a necessary component of continuing work to reduce the need for remediation as students enter college.

7 Concomitantly, there must be clearly articulated and consistently implemented university transfer pathways that students can navigate without loss of credits, and with their associate degree program credits applicable to the transfer major in the university. Increasingly, given changing labor market demands, these pathways should include professional/technical programs (AAS degrees) as well as the traditional arts and sciences (AA and AS degrees).

8 Community college pathways, particularly through professional/ technical programs, need to be better aligned with the Idaho economy and with state and local strategies for economic and workforce development. When community colleges are deeply and consistently involved in the strategic conversations, they are better positioned to offer the programs that close existing skills gaps, eliminate programs that do not lead to family-supporting jobs, and build programs (in partnership with business and industry) that will help create new businesses and new jobs for Idahoans.

• CONCLUSION •

None of these recommendations can be implemented cost-free. The challenging tasks for community college leaders (along with their K–12 colleagues) are to rigorously examine the effectiveness of existing programs, consider high-impact programs in other colleges, and commit to serious reallocation of existing resources in order to implement effective practices at scale. This is an intellectually challenging and politically risky business, as it inevitably means that colleges must *stop doing* some things that are less effective, outdated, or infeasible at scale. Further, the necessary changes in institutional structures, curriculum, service delivery, and even culture are substantial and daunting. Governing boards in particular should understand the magnitude of change that may be required.

The task for education leaders and policymakers at the state level, as well as for the philanthropic community, is to create policy and fiscal conditions within which community colleges can do the work their students, communities, and state need them to do. The costs of not doing this will inevitably be paid in terms of threats to economic prosperity and quality of life for the citizens of Idaho.

Reclaiming the American Dream is a worthy challenge, and it requires collective commitment and action from all of us.

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