

The Equity Agenda and Community College Workforce Development

James Jacobs

Community College Research Center
Teachers College, Columbia University
and

Macomb Community College
Warren, Michigan

Addressing Achievement Gaps

Education Testing Service

May 22, 2007

What Is an Equity Agenda for Workforce Development?

- Beyond the “open door”—equity means paying attention to whether occupational programs produce student success for low-income students
- Whether workforce programs are designed to fit the needs of low-income students
- Whether programs in workforce development not only achieve employment for low-skilled adults, but also careers in which they can earn sustainable wages

Community College Workforce Development Mission

- One of the central aspects of the comprehensive community college
- Found in many parts of the college
- Often uncoordinated:
 - Growth of non-credit programs
 - Development of information technology programs

But Community Colleges Are Gatekeepers of Opportunity

- Community college programs have real income gains
- Programs are geared to employment in sustainable careers as opposed to entry level jobs
- Increasing development of four-year technology programs—NSF ATE programs etc.

The Nation's Workforce Training Provider

- Over 3.6 million students in credit occupational programs
- Over 1 million students in non-credit contracted programs
- Serve more than 30% of adults using WIA vouchers
- Created over 1,000 new courses and programs through the National Science Foundation's Advanced Technology Program

Training the Technology Workforce

- 60% of all nurses received their degrees at community colleges
- 60% of all “first responders” (police, fire, EMS) received training at community colleges
- 50% of students in teacher education programs started at community colleges
- Community colleges are the largest source of apprenticeships to construction and manufacturing industries

Community College Programs Have Big Economic Returns

Returns to:	Percentage Difference in Earnings compared to high school graduates	
	Male	Female
1 year of postsecondary technical courses	8.0	5.4
Credential:		
Institutional certificate	6.5	16.3
Tech. associate degree	30.2	47.0

General Postsecondary Workforce Development Trends

- Decline in the traditional work force programs in manufacturing and entry level business, increase in health care programs
- Growing significance of occupational students seeking a four year degree
- Major increase in the non-credit programs; stagnation or decline in the credit workforce programs

New Careers Clusters

- Emphasis upon four year degree professions: teaching, informational technology, technicians and nursing
- Make community college component part of the four year system: emergence of the applied baccalaureate degree
- Issue: where are the work-related courses performed—what is the role for the community college?

Issues

- Is there evidence that indicates community college workforce programs are serving low-income students?
- How does serving the employment needs of firms open growth of non-credit occupational programs to advance the issues of equity?
- What are some new promising practices that can aid in the development of workforce programs which are aimed a low-income adults?

Issue One:

The Case of Information Technology Certifications

Community College Adoption of Certification Programs

- By 2000-2001 25% of all community colleges were offering certification programs in information technology
- Total number of community college information technology degrees conferred in 2000 was 20,450

Significance of Information Technology

- Significant growth in demand for these skills by employers presents an opportunity for workforce programs
- Some evidence that degrees and long term education were less important to companies than ability to perform the job
- Obtaining certifications could be done quickly and should lead to immediate employment

Issues

- Were certifications replacing traditional vocational education courses?
- How were the certification programs influencing the development of the workforce development programs?
- What was the relationship of these program to the ability of the colleges to find employment for students, particularly from low income backgrounds?

Empirical Findings

- Study of 16 community colleges by CCRC revealed:
 - Certification programs were primarily utilized by those within the industry to gain greater mobility in the job market
 - Most colleges ran certification and credit programs alongside each other
 - Little data which indicates that certifications provided access to the labor market even in 1990s
 - Most information technology firms prefer degrees as opposed to certifications

Empirical Findings

- Most colleges offered both traditional courses and certifications without much integration
- Certifications involvement declined as the recession continued
- Many colleges used part timers or private companies to deliver the instruction
- Implementation of certifications was motivated by need respond to a national trend
- Little evidence of any local market analysis
- No evidence of any change in the transcripts, or other activities within the workforce development

Empirical Findings

- Costs of the certification programs were significantly higher than regular tuition and there were few relationships with WIA, TANF recipients—issue of equity
- College were more responsive to specific private market, than to more general areas such as skill standards

Issue Two

The growing significance of non-credit education

Non-Credit Education Is Growing

- From 1995 to 1999, national surveys indicated that non-credit grew to exceed credit programs by more than 8 percent
- 61 percent of all community colleges offered non-credit occupational education courses that lead to non-degree certificates
- Growth of non-credit programs brings renewed interest from the states, accreditation agencies, and registrars

Not only Growth, But Additional Missions of Non-Credit Education

- 1970—Original mission of non-credit was personal enrichment
- 1980—Non-credit education is linked to customized training and state economic development programs
- 1990—Focus upon information technology certifications
- Linkage between ESL and basic education with credit occupational programs

Non-Credit Education and the Knowledge Economy

Growing demand for non-credit education exists because:

- Can meet industry standards and credentials
- Flexible and easily updated
- Content emphasizes abilities that are important to job performance
- Can be delivered with appropriate instructors
- Developed and delivered outside the traditional rules governing education

State Funding for Non-Credit Occupational Education

- General funds for non-credit occupational education is a changing area of state policy
- Most states have workforce training funds; just over half specify a role for community colleges
- Few states limit tuition charges; colleges often charge “what the market will bear”

Reporting and Data Systems for Non-Credit Occupational Education

- Many states have reporting requirements, but few collect or receive comprehensive and reliable data
- State data systems can facilitate data collection for reporting requirements, but must account for the unique format of non-credit programs

Non-credit Education and Equity

- *Often not relevant* - Non-credit market is enterprises and incumbent workers, not individuals seeking work
- *Costly* - Tuition often exceeds credit courses and no student aid
- *Disconnected* - non-credit education does not lead to individual credentials

Promising Practices: Linking Credit and Non-Credit

- Some colleges are linking adult basic education to technology training programs with dual positive results for low income adults — they gain skills and they gain credit for future degrees
- Colleges are linking short term training “chunks” into long term credit programs
- Students in work-based programs such as apprenticeship are earning degrees as well as employment

Challenges Ahead

- How can these programs be developed to bring career pathways into good paying high-skilled jobs?
- How do the colleges accelerate the learning process for low-income students so they can combine foundational skills and technical skills education together?
- How do colleges provide adequate support services within the workforce programs to help low-income, low-skilled students actually succeed in these programs?

Making Equity Real in Community College Workforce Education

- Taking a broad view of workforce education - from preparation, recruitment, assessment, counseling, to completion
- Developing programs that produce student success among low income students
- Making sure workforce development programs are linked to career pathways that fit student needs for income and careers
- Measuring community impact through equity goals

The Community College Research Center (CCRC)

CCRC conducts quantitative and qualitative studies on community colleges to analyze their policies and programs and uncover emerging trends. Our mission is to contribute to the development of practice and policy that expands access to higher education and promotes success for all students.



We focus on:

- Access to and success in postsecondary education
- High school to college transition
- Missions, governance and accountability
- Programs and practice
- Workforce education

Presentations and Publications

- CCRC leadership and research staff are frequently sought for their expertise, and present findings to a variety of audiences at major conferences nationwide.
- A partial list of coverage in national, regional and trade publications includes:

Wall Street Journal, New York Times, Associated Press, Chronicle of Higher Education, Community College Week, Economics of Education Review, Research in Higher Education



Above: Director Thomas Bailey speaks at the Campaign for Educational Equity's 2005 Symposium

For more information:

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Community College Research Center

Institute on Education and the Economy, Teachers College, Columbia University

525 West 120th Street, Box 174, New York, NY 10027

E-mail: ccrc@columbia.edu

Telephone: 212.678.3091

*CCRC is funded in part by: Alfred P. Sloan foundation, Lumina Foundation for Education,
The Ford Foundation National Science Foundation (NSF),
Institute of Education Sciences of the U.S. Department of Education*