



ACCESSeD

Connecting state legislators to policy resources that support higher education access for women and minorities

AccessEd

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ACCESS AND SERVICE DELIVERY OF HIGHER EDUCATION: LEGISLATIVE HIGHLIGHT

Representative Skip Priest, 30th District, Washington
122A Legislative Building • PO Box 40600 • Olympia, WA 98504-0600 • (360) 786-7830

In my prior career in real estate management and international finance, having a vision and strategic direction was imperative. I look at higher education the same way. It is critical to be able to articulate a strategic direction for public higher education on issues of access, affordability, service delivery and accountability and then use that strategic direction to guide decision making on policies, operating budgets and capital plans. Furthermore, I think it is the duty of the Legislature to provide the management tools and resources necessary for agencies to implement the strategic direction.

Last year, I was the prime sponsor of a bill that focused on access and service delivery. There are a number of regions in Washington where residents have limited access to baccalaureate degrees; this bill provided a strategy to expand capacity for baccalaureate degrees in those areas through a new method of program delivery. It proposed that community and technical colleges could enter into agreements with one or more regional universities, branch campuses or our state college to offer baccalaureate degrees. Alternately, the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges (SBCTC) could enter into a master agreement with any of the public four-year institutions to operate on multiple college campuses.

This approach was selected for two primary reasons. First, it would efficiently

and effectively address access barriers, as Washington has a large community and technical college system, and a relatively small four-year college system. The legislation allowed us to tap into the wide accessibility of the community and technical colleges, and have them contract with four-year colleges and universities to offer bachelors degrees. Second, the community and technical colleges are highly regarded for their responsiveness to meeting industry and community needs.

This year, the Legislature provided funding in the supplemental budget to make this proposal happen. Funding was given directly to the SBCTC, which was directed to allocate funds based on an analysis of gaps in service delivery, capacity, and student and employer demand for programs. Though funding will be delivered through the community and technical college system, students will be considered students, and graduates, of the partner four-year institution.

Three colleges were selected to begin offering bachelors degrees in fields which data show are in demand in their region -- Applied Science in Information Technology, Elementary Education with specializations in Reading, Special Education and English as a Second Language, and Social Work. Combined, they will enroll about 100 Full Time Equivalent students per year. All three programs are scheduled to begin this fall, and will serve as a significant first step

in providing a solution to a real educational need in Washington.

Through complementary legislation, and a separate competitive proposal process, four community colleges were awarded start-up funds to offer specific high demand applied baccalaureate degrees. The first four-year degrees offered by Washington's community colleges are in radiation and imaging sciences, nursing, applied-science in management, and applied science in hospitality management.

Developing a strategic direction for public higher education remains vitally important to improving the status of education in our states. I look forward to continuing to work with my colleagues to make this a priority.



Women In Government's Access to Higher Education Policy Research Center is dedicated to identifying policy issues, gathering research data and information, and providing a centralized clearinghouse for state legislators on ways to increase access to higher education for women and minorities.

COMMUNITY COLLEGES: THE RECIPE FOR SUCCESS

By Lily Davidson, Communication and Technology Manager, Women Work! The National Network for Women's Employment

In August 1996, Jill filed for a legal separation from her abusive husband. With no money and two young daughters, she knew it would be a struggle to gain the skills she needed to support her family.

Jill's story is not unique. In 2003 there were nearly 21 million single mothers and displaced homemakers in the United States, according to Chutes and Ladders: The search for Solid Ground for Women in the Workforce, a report from Women Work! The National Network for Women's Employment. Though the majority of single mothers are working, nearly half are poor or near poor. Like most single mothers and displaced homemakers, Jill lacked the education she needed to find well-paying employment. However, soon after the separation, she

learned of the Tri-County Women's Resource Center, a member of Women Work!'s national network of education and training programs. The Center, located in Mount Airy, North Carolina, provided tuition grants and transportation funding, enabling Jill to take at Surry Community College.



For many women who need to acquire marketable skills or who wish to gain an advanced degree, community colleges present a valuable opportunity. There are more than 1,150 community colleges in the United States, providing access to higher education for those who might not otherwise have the opportunity.

Though the tuition at community colleges is much lower than at most four year colleges, for women raising children the added costs of child care and transportation can make even community college unattainable. "At the federal level, the maximum Pell Grant has remained at \$4,050 per year since the 2002 fiscal year, not keeping pace either with inflation or tuition increases," according to George Boggs, President of the American Association of Community Colleges.

Jill's success in school was due largely to the support she received from Tri-County Women's Resource Center. More than 40 percent of Women Work! organizations are housed within community colleges where they help women overcome the multiple challenges they face in obtaining education, training and employment. Many of these organizations receive support from their state governments in order to make up the short falls in federal funding for financial aid, but they are still struggling to assist all the women in need of services.

For Jill the support services provided by Tri-County Women's Resource Center and the accessibility of the courses offered at her local community college was the recipe for success. She received a BA from Salem College and was accepted to law school. Since 1978, Women Work! members, in partnership with community colleges, have helped more than 10 million women become economically self-sufficient. For more information about Women Work! visit www.womenwork.org.

COMMUNITY COLLEGE STATISTICS

From the American Association of Community Colleges Community College Fact Sheet

- Average student age at a community college is 29.
- Enrollment: 11.6 million students
- \$2,076 is the average annual tuition at public community colleges
- Revenue sources of public community colleges
 - 44% state funds
 - 20% tuition and fees
 - 20% local funds
 - 5% federal funds
 - 11% other
- Student profile (percentage of all undergraduate students)
 - 46% of black
 - 56% of Hispanic
 - 48% of Asian/Pacific Islander
 - 57% of Native American
- 48% of community colleges offer welfare-to-work programs
- 65% of new health care workers get their training at community colleges

TWO-YEAR INSTITUTIONS

AN EXCERPT FROM THE LUMINA FOUNDATION MAGAZINE FOCUS: BARRIER BUSTERS

Author: Steve Giegerich



As more and more students turn to community colleges to help them transform their lives, these two-year schools are seeking to transform themselves. At least two forces are driving this change: First is the widespread belief – and a founding principle of the community college movement – that a college education should be accessible to all Americans who seek it. Second is the increasingly urgent message that a high school diploma, once considered the standard for economic success, is no longer sufficient to compete in the highly competitive, global job market.

With the cost of an education at four-year residential institutions skyrocketing, community colleges also have become an increasingly popular option for students who want to meet basic course requirements at lower prices before moving on to a four-year institution. Finally, with their emphasis on community, public two-year schools continue to serve workers who want to upgrade the job skills that keep local economies viable.

The multiple missions of community colleges are, policy-makers agree, both the bane and the blessing of the system. Almost universally acclaimed by the communities they serve, two-year schools offer a range of services that can sometimes leave the institutions grasping for definitions and identity. That uncertainty, in turn, can feed a common misperception that community colleges are the second-class citizens of American higher education.

“We don’t always rank as the college of choice, even among the faculty,” said Kimberly McKay, outreach coordinator for student services and development at South Texas College in McAllen, Texas.

Lori Baker, dean of student services at Virginia Western Community College in Roanoke, believes that sentiment is evolving. “The community college doesn’t have all the amenities that four-year colleges have....I think the community college system provides what we’re

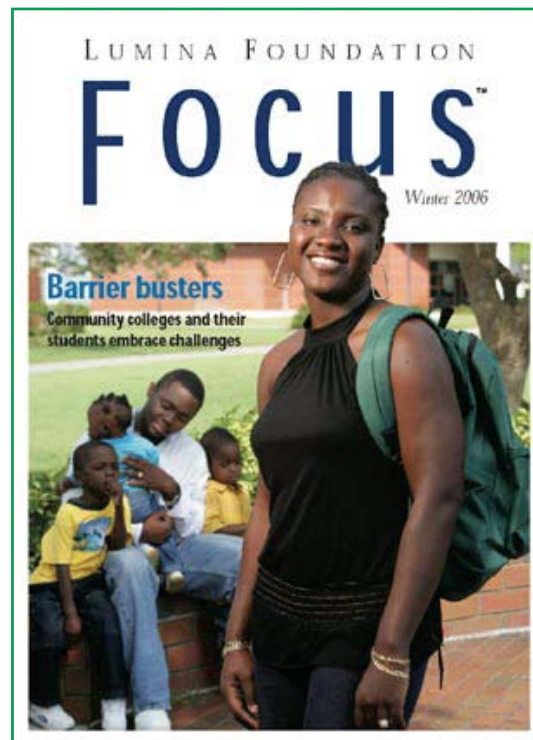
all truly trying to provide – an education that will help students meet their goals.”

Still, there’s always room for improvement, and the nation’s community colleges are embracing that spirit and working to transform the culture of two-year higher education. Some attribute the changes to natural progression, the transition to a new generation of leaders and faculty from those who have guided community colleges since their widespread inception in the 1960s and 1970s.

Community colleges have always filled at least two basic niches: preparing transfer students for four-year institutions and meeting the workforce-development needs of the communities they serve. What has changed, according to Thomas Bailey, director of the Community College Research Center at Teachers College, Columbia University, is a shift in institutions’ focus from inputs (enrollment rates) to outcomes (rates of attainment or success).

This emphasis on accountability is making community colleges take a hard and honest look at how well they serve the students they enroll. Perhaps the students they’re looking at most closely are those who drop out after one semester or less. To meet the challenge of getting more students through the first year and beyond, community colleges are turning to a familiar but often-underused tool: student-outcomes data.

It’s not that community colleges have operated in a data vacuum. The numbers were always there, but these days, community colleges are crunching them in ways they’ve never done before. This data-driven trend is part of the general movement toward greater accountability in education that is perhaps most evident in the federal No Child Left Behind Law. The trend also is being spurred by efforts such as Achieving the Dream: Community Colleges Count, a national initiative that aims to improve success rates among community college students, particularly those in underserved, at-risk populations.



ACCESS TO HIGHER EDUCATION POLICY RESEARCH CENTER ANNOUNCEMENTS

UPDATE ON STATE BRIEFINGS:

Women In Government Holds First Ever State Briefings on Higher Education

From February to April, the Women In Government Access to Higher Education Policy Research Center held four state briefings, located in Maryland, New York, Connecticut and Massachusetts. These state briefings brought together state legislators, advocates, higher education faculty and staff, members of the state boards of higher education and Women In Government staff, and provided a chance to talk about current issues in access to higher education. Speakers included Dr. Britt Kirwin, Chancellor of the University of Maryland, Leroy Foster and Sandra Pradas of the Posse Foundation, Dr. Blenda Wilson, President of the Nellie Mae Education Foundation, Dr. Valerie Lewis, Chancellor of the Connecticut Department of Higher Education, and Bill Guenther, President of Mass Insight Education and Mass Insight Corporation. The state briefings were supported by a generous grant from the Nellie Mae Education Foundation.

If you would like more information on access to higher education issues, or to receive a free copy of Women In Government's Legislative Toolkit, please email highered@womeningovernment.org or call the InfoLine at 1-888-333-0164.

HIGHER EDUCATION POLICY RESOURCES

*American Association
of Community Colleges*
<http://www.aacc.nche.edu>

*Education Commission
of the States*
<http://www.ecs.org>

*Institute for
Higher Education Policy*
<http://www.ihep.org>

*National Center
for Education Statistics*
<http://nces.ed.gov>

Lumina Foundation for Education
www.luminafoundation.org

Nellie Mae Education Foundation
www.nmefdn.org

CONTACT INFORMATION FOR ACCESS TO HIGHER EDUCATION POLICY RESEARCH CENTER

highered@womeningovernment.org

www.womeningovernment.org/highered

2600 Virginia Avenue, NW / Suite 709 / Washington, DC 20037

p 202.333.0825 / f 202.333.0875

Info Line 1-888-333-0164

Women In Government is a national 501(c)(3), non-profit, bi-partisan organization of women state legislators providing leadership opportunities, networking, expert forums, and educational resources to address and resolve complex public policy issues.

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Suite 709
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