



Alliance for Community College
Excellence in Practice

EXPLORING *the* FUTURE *of* COMMUNITY COLLEGES

A detailed line drawing of a person's head in profile, looking through binoculars. The drawing is rendered in a dark, textured style with many fine lines, giving it a sketchy, artistic appearance. The person's hand is visible holding the binoculars. The background of the entire cover is a solid dark red color with faint, swirling line patterns.

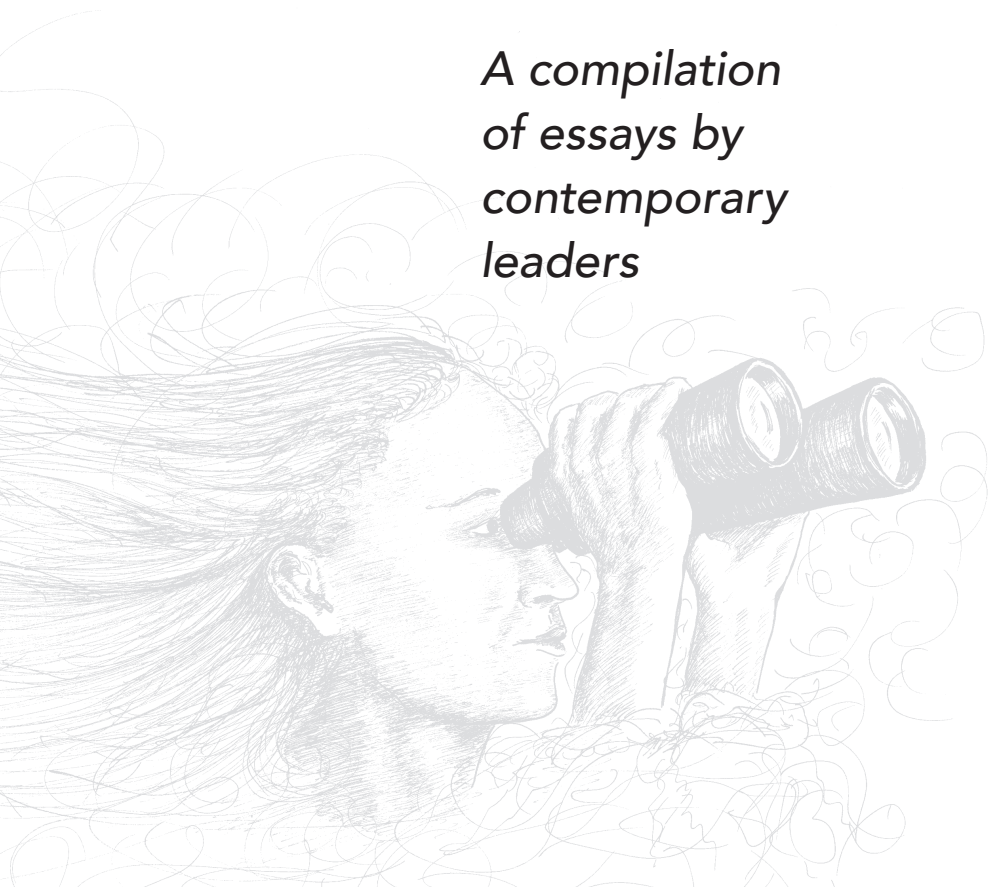
*A compilation
of essays by
contemporary
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Noreen Thomas (ed.)

ISBN10 - 0-9758727-9-6

ISBN13 - 978-0-9758727-9-6

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Alliance for Community College Excellence in Practice

Ferris State University

410 Oak Street - ALU 113

Big Rapids, MI 49307

Scholar Talk Press

5523 Jerome Lane

Grand Blanc, MI 48439

Printed in the United States of America

Cover & Book Design/Illustration

by Mara Jevera Fulmer

Suggested Citation:

Thomas, N. (2014). *Exploring the Future of Community Colleges*. Grand Blanc, MI: Scholar Talk Press.

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This project is sponsored by
Doctorate in Community College
Leadership and Ferris State
University Alliance for Community
College Excellence in Practice.

Foreword

Sandra Balkema, PhD.

*DCCL Dissertation Director & Professor of English
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THE ORIGINAL DEFINITION OF THE WORD “ESSAY” CARRIED THE IMPLICATION of testing, trying, and weighing an item’s value. When the term was first applied to writing (often attributed to Montaigne’s work in the late 1500s), it retained this exploratory aspect. Essays were, and are, meant to be a person’s exploration of thoughts and ideas in written form.

This collection of essays reflects that classic sense of exploration, questioning, and discovery. The ten essays contained here, sponsored by the Alliance for Community College Excellence In Practice, were prompted by a challenge prior to the Alliance’s first symposium, held in Traverse City, Michigan, in the summer of 2013. The symposium topic: The Future of Community Colleges. Before the July “Futures” discussion brought 50 people together, the participants – community college leaders, visionaries, teachers, and learners – were invited to explore topics related to present and future opportunities facing higher education. They were asked to consider implications. Raise questions. And posit thoughtful commentary.

The Futures symposium was full of energy and ideas. It was also full of conversation, discussion, and even intense argument. Those who participated were energized to think, to question, and to return to their home institutions with motivation to continue the discussions. These essays were the embers that fueled those discussions.

This collection begins with Carol D’Amico’s challenge to community college leaders to question their readiness for the future – Will community colleges be prepared to accept the changes ahead, from economic difficulties and fast-changing technology, to

the public's distrust and disenchantment with academic credentials? She presents several intriguing "what ifs" to stretch our expectations and our thinking around workforce development. Curtis Ivery looks at another of the spheres where community colleges have been a force in the past, and he pushes us to consider the ways community colleges must lead the way in creating open, responsive, multiracial, democratic societies. Gary Wheeler questions whether the community college mission is ready to expand to meet the needs of an increasingly global and international community. Are community colleges prepared to be the "link to businesses and markets beyond their close [geographic] borders"? Peg Lee asks us to consider the foundational competencies required for leadership, including the essential role of courage – and heart, and how well our institutions prepare young leaders to lead.

These intriguing topics are just the first four in the collection! Robbie Teahen follows with a conversation about the role of accountability and assessment, and how our colleges can use their institutional data most effectively. Tim Nelson looks at the business side of our community colleges, asking how we reduce costs, increase productivity, and most importantly, determine value. Noreen Thomas continues the conversation by discussing the need for leaders to move beyond the status quo in all areas, including their curricular offerings and delivery models, and ask themselves if they have the

Will community colleges be prepared to accept the changes ahead, from economic difficulties and fast-changing technology, to the public's distrust and disenchantment with academic credentials?

will to make change happen. Another topic central to the Futures discussion was the effect of changes in course delivery methods. Deb Thalner addresses some of the benefits – and risks – associated with MOOCs; Mike Ennis follows with recommendations for facing technology change and using emerging technology appropriately. Finally, Tim Nelson closes the collection with a thoughtful (and thought-provoking!) comparison of two sectors: the health field and higher education.

Now we invite you to explore these “futures” with the writers. And we also invite you to use these preliminary ideas and thoughts in your own institutions to begin your own conversations. Each essay concludes with a few probing questions, ideas for you and your community college colleagues to consider. Establish a brown bag lunch series around these topics, using the essay to start the discussion. Use the essays as thought starters for staff meetings, as you think strategically about the challenges facing your institution. Invite visionaries on your campus to share their ideas on the future of community colleges, of higher education, and of your own institutional future. Begin, and continue, the conversation.

***“As future leaders,
we strive to constantly
seek input of others,
perpetually stretching
higher to achieve
worthwhile goals.
We examine our own
attitudes and search
for the correct questions
as well as the right
answers. And then with
integrity and respect, we
demonstrate that work
can be accomplished by
laboring alongside our
colleagues.”***

~ Vicki Maxa

*Emerging leader and doctoral student at
Ferris State University, DCCL Program.
Grand Rapids Community College*

On the Cutting Edge – a Personal View

It is Time for Community Colleges to be Cool Again



By Carol D'Amico, PhD

USA Funds and former Deputy Secretary of Education

MY INFATUATION WITH COMMUNITY COLLEGES BEGAN IN THE EARLY 1980s when I started my career in the then-new field of “workforce development.” Community colleges were so cool to me compared with the rest of post-secondary education. They seemed student friendly, hired people who worked in the fields in which they taught, related to the real world, and appeared flexible and nimble. They were the “skunk-works” of higher education, to borrow a term from that era, and I suspect that some in higher education secretly wanted to be more like them. In the mid 1990s, when my co-author Dick Judy and I wrote the book *Workforce 2020*, we wrote that community colleges hold the key to preparing the future workforce for the beginning of the Innovation Economy.

But my infatuation is now turning to disappointment and disillusionment. I am not sure how cool community colleges are today. They look very much like the rest of higher education. Maybe, like other artifacts of the 1960s, it is inevitable that they would become part of the “establishment.” Or maybe, there is justified cause for my increasing disillusionment.

I closely examined this issue when I was recently asked to make a speech to community college leaders on the future of community colleges as the nation’s preparer of the workforce. In a way, it is an odd concept. It would seem that this is an auspicious time for community colleges. President Obama promotes community

“It would seem that this is an auspicious time for community colleges. President Obama promotes community colleges as an answer to our economic prosperity, and students are flocking to them as the affordable option for post-secondary education and occupational preparation.”

colleges as an answer to our economic prosperity, and students are flocking to them as the affordable option for post-secondary education and occupational preparation. To some, it seems that community colleges have finally come into their own, having for decades been viewed as the “stepchild” of higher education.

So why is it that in my address to these leaders I offered a cautionary scenario for the future of community colleges as the preparer of the nation’s workforce?

The future is one of both opportunities and threats for community colleges. Unless there is a major refit in how they operate, they are in danger of becoming, at best, extraneous in the preparation of our workforce, and at worse, a drain on the system. This will eventually cause deep resentment from their higher education peers and policymakers who today sing their praises.

States and the nation are relying on community colleges to prepare the nation’s workforce for our innovation economy. Yet the evidence is undeniable: community colleges are struggling to meet this challenge. Too few students who attend community colleges finish with a credential that prepares them for the workforce, and there is plenty of information to suggest that employers have lost faith in the value of the academic degrees (this is true in all of higher education).

There are converging forces that are causing the need for a major overhaul: constant churning in the economy, the growing dominance and influence of technology in learning, and the value placed on competencies gained over degrees.

First, the economy churns. Jobs are shed by technological advances and new jobs are created. The advancement of robotics

will have a profound change on virtually every occupation and every economic sector. Schools and colleges are expected to prepare students for jobs and careers that haven't been created yet, and we have no way of knowing what these jobs are. But what we do know about success in the future economy is that it will require increasing levels of technological literacy and competence and will place great value on creativity, problem solving, and effective communication.

This raises questions about the content of our educational programs and the very fabric of how colleges operate today. Specifically, questions will surface about how broad our education should be and the efficacy of cherished practices in education such as a plethora of program offerings, organizing education along departmental silos, narrow skills training, the arcane processes of articulation along the continuum of education, measuring learning based on seat time, and the reliance on the one size fits all face-to-face instruction.

Second, technology is having a profound impact on how we learn.

Yet education seems to be slow at capitalizing on this opportunity. We know this about how most people learn today: it is by doing. How many of us had formal training in how to use an iPhone, computer or iPad before we bought one? How many had formal courses in Microsoft Office such as Word, Excel, and Power Point before we

“There are converging forces that are causing the need for a major overhaul: constant churning in the economy; the growing dominance and influence of technology in learning; and the value placed on competencies gained over degrees.”

“We know this about how most people learn today: it is by doing.”

used them? Probably not many of us. We bought these devices and software, realized what we did and didn't know

about them, and then we sought the instruction to fill in the gaps. We went to the Apple store, sought online learning from web sites or blogs by users of the same equipment, or we got a tutor like our children, nieces, nephews or grandchildren. We learned by doing, failing, learning about what we did wrong, and doing it again.

When most young people today want to learn something, their first reaction is not to sign up for a class. They get on YouTube. One of my young staff members learned how to weld from YouTube. Now eventually there has to be a hands-on component to this learning for her to be a proficient welder. I wouldn't want her making parts for my next car at this point in her learning. But the education of that future welder could be a hybrid approach between the technology, watching a master welder teach on YouTube, and a hands-on approach in a physical lab. But wouldn't it be interesting if she turned up at a community college and received college credit for what she was able to learn on her own? Wouldn't this practice accelerate preparation and at the same time reduce costs without compromising quality? This approach could be used for virtually any subject matter and for students of all ages and education levels, yet it would be particularly favorable to young people who are coming through our colleges and have dealt with technology all their lives.

Third, the growing disenchantment with the quality of academic degrees. We know from survey after survey that employers are expressing concern over the quality of college degrees and are becoming more reliant on credentials that they, themselves, sanction. Why is it that in this era of high unemployment employers cannot find qualified talent, at any level? While we talk about how closely educators and employers work together, is it time to think of ways to more closely connect businesses and educators in the preparation of students for the workforce? Will this allow for greater alignment between employer needs and the skill sets of the workforce? There is

a disconnect between what employers say they need in successful employees and what they say is the skill base in applicants for jobs. This disconnect exists at all levels: entry, mid-level, and high level positions. There have been hundreds, maybe even thousands of reports on this topic in the last decade. Yet little seems to have changed. We must ask: Why?

“What if employer mentors were identified early on in a student’s education program and stayed with that student throughout the duration of the student’s education?”

Is it time to look at a new model of education where employers become more integral to education and workforce preparation as a way to align education offerings with the competencies valued in the workforce? There has been much discussion recently about the importance of “ships” in the education and training of the workforce: mentorship, internship, scholarship, and apprenticeship, all requiring real and substantive involvement of employers in the education process.

In education, these happen in isolation and sporadically. But what if the responsibility for education was split between the college and the employers? And, students could get credit for the learning that took place at the employer’s site. What if employers actually sat down and helped to develop and provide the curriculum instead of being asked to bless it after it was developed through perfunctory advisory councils?

The term “work-based learning” has been around for a while but how widespread and robust is it in the U.S.? What if there was truly work-based learning where students spend half their time at a company and the other half in the school, and received appropriate credit for their time at the company? What if employer mentors were identified early on in a student’s education program and stayed with that student throughout the duration of the student’s education?

“This is a pivotal time for community colleges, and they have an opportunity to change how millions of people in the U.S. will be prepared for the workforce.”

There are such arrangements every day in higher education in the health care field where hospitals are an accepted, and indeed are expected, to be an integral part of the preparation of health care professionals. What is prohibiting this model from extending to other sectors such as manufacturing and information technology to name just two?

There are innovative education providers that are addressing each one of these challenges and opportunities. And they are providing educational opportunities and competency-based credentials that are less expensive, accelerated, and accepted with equal value in the market place. For the most part, these ventures are outside the public sector community college system. Time will tell whether these new ventures will seriously challenge the pervasive community college system in this country. But as community college leaders, we can't afford to wait around to find out. Today, community college leaders need to embrace these converging trends and take them to the logical conclusion of what it means for their organizations – embrace technology and employers as integral parts of the curriculum and become the facilitator of learning instead of the sole provider.

This is a pivotal time for community colleges, and they have an opportunity to change how millions of people in the U.S. will be prepared for the workforce. I hope they accept the challenge. It is time for them to be cool again.

Has your organization considered...

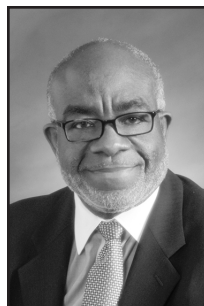
- ◉ *The “ships” are essential for organizational success...partnerships, mentorships, internships, and scholarships. Are they maximized to their potential to advance your mission? Do they need to be reassessed, reconfigured, or reenergized?*
- ◉ *How can you engage employers as active partners in a student’s formal education? How would student learning be enhanced?*
- ◉ *In this time of high unemployment, why is it that employers cannot find qualified talent? What role and responsibility does your community college have in addressing this need?*

“A positive culture of student success, in the midst of challenging times, causes institutions to reexamine traditional educational models; they are turning to frameworks that promote new or different ideas.”

~ Lori Gonko

*Emerging leader and doctoral student at
Ferris State University, DCCL Program.
Henry Ford Community College*

The Community College Role in Shaping a Multiracial Democracy



By Curtis L. Ivery, PhD

Chancellor

Wayne County Community College District, Michigan

IN THE FUTURE, COMMUNITY COLLEGES WILL PLAY A CENTRAL ROLE in advancing the next phase of civil rights and social equity struggles. Community colleges will have a moral and social mandate to assist in overcoming the persistent and entrenched disparities in income, educational levels, and economic opportunities experienced by African Americans, Latinos, American Indians, and other minorities in American society. While much progress has been made since the beginning of the civil rights movement over fifty years ago, massive disparities between minorities and the white majority in terms of income, mobility, educational opportunities, and employability continue to persist. In this next phase, community college leaders are challenged to be at the forefront of the struggle to create a multiracial democracy in which all citizens “come together across lines of race, religion, class, and gender to collectively unite in support of racial and ethnic equality” (Ivery, 2011, p. xcii).

The future of the community college is deeply interwoven with the future of those disenfranchised and impoverished groups who live in the shadows of our cities, suburbs, and rural areas. While the inequities caused by racial isolation and concentrated poverty are more pronounced in our urban centers, our suburban and rural areas have experienced a rise in poverty levels in the past decade as well. For all of these groups, the community college is the primary, and often only, gateway to entry into economic mainstream and social justice. If the community college of the future fails to provide local,

state, and national leadership in creating a multiracial democracy, it will have forfeited its vital and irreplaceable value to our society.

In the face of these enduring challenges, community colleges are taking bold and courageous steps to be on the front lines of the ongoing societal struggle to achieve a genuine multiracial democracy. For example, the mission of San Jose City College (California) is to “affect social justice by providing open and equitable access to quality education and programs that prepare individuals for successful careers and active participation in a diverse, global society.” Major innovations to address existing inequities are taking place in areas such as college and career readiness, student success and completion, career education and workforce development, organizational and leadership structures, assessment and institutional effectiveness, student support services, and community engagement. Of these innovations, the most impactful future roles of the community college in advancing a multiracial democracy are likely to be:

- ◉ ***Serving both the individual and public good:*** *The community college of the future will increase its emphasis on community engagement to complement its traditional individual development role.*
- ◉ ***Serving as a primary center of community talent development:*** *To prepare for the future, create pathways to career success as community colleges open the door to the economic mainstream for underprepared individuals.*
- ◉ ***Serving as an advocate and leader of social justice:*** *An essential future role of community college leaders is the targeting of the educational resources of the college on overcoming barriers to career and college success such as racial and economic isolation, poverty, illiteracy, and limited job skills.*

Wangari Maathai, recipient of the 2004 Nobel Peace Prize for her contribution to sustainable development, democracy, and

peace, stated that “In the course of history, there comes a time when humanity is called to shift to a new level of consciousness, to reach a higher moral ground, a time when we have to shed our fear and give hope to one another.” The 2013-16 strategic plan of the Lumina Foundation calls the current racial and ethnic inequities in terms of educational opportunity an “intolerable situation that must be rejected on moral grounds given the increasingly severe consequences of not obtaining a post-secondary education” (2013).

In my view, the commitment of a community college leader to engage in the struggle for a multiracial democracy is a “decision of the heart” – it is a decision to exercise moral authority rather than official authority. It is through leaders who embed the ideals of social justice and equality in their college’s values and culture that the ideals of a multiracial democracy can be achieved at the local level. From this local level, we can change the nation and indeed, the world. In the words of John F. Kennedy:

“The energy, the faith, and the devotion we bring to this endeavor will light our nation and all who serve it, and the flow from that fire will truly light the lives of generations to come.”

“In my view, the commitment of a community college leader to engage in the struggle for a multiracial democracy is a “decision of the heart” – it is a decision to exercise moral authority rather than official authority.”



Has your organization considered...

- Some say **demographics predict destiny**. What do current and future demographic projections tell you about your college and the profile of the potential student body, faculty, and staff?
- Do the values espoused by your organization prepare you to address the societal injustices and the educational needs in your community?
- Is the societal imperative of serving both the individual and public good part of the community college mission...or is this the responsibility of other organizations to address?
- Has your college taken bold steps to provide equal opportunities to the underserved in your district? If so, have adequate resources been allocated to create value-added results?

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Globalization: Its Impact on Enrollments, Curricula, Partnerships, and Career Opportunities for Graduates



By Gary Wheeler, PhD

President Emeritus, Glen Oaks Community College, Michigan

COMMUNITY COLLEGES ARE GROUNDED IN LOCALITIES, arising from and responsive to the local communities from which they receive students and financial support. Yet as America's local communities have come under the influence of increasing globalization pressures, high levels of immigration, businesses dependent on export relationships, and a world made accessible through technology, the challenge of responding to the impact of globalization is a clear imperative. According to Treat & Hagedorn (2013), junior colleges were rebranded as community colleges to emphasize local connections and broaden the transfer mission. Issues emanating from, or extending beyond, the local are pushing colleges to re-examine missions and areas of opportunity. Simply put, the definition of community is changing, becoming broader and more international.

Focusing on global connections and community colleges is not new. Begun in 1976, Community Colleges for International Development, Inc. (CCID, 2010) is an organization of nearly 150 community colleges whose stated mission is "...providing international networking opportunities to build global relationships that strengthen educational programs, and promote economic development." In 1994, the American Council on International Intercultural Education (ACIIE) convened a series of conferences to help colleges understand the growing interest in global issues, focusing on key questions such as "What does it mean to be a globally competent learner?" and "What



is required institutionally for community colleges to produce globally competent learners?" According to the Southern Rural Development Center (Rosenfeld, 2000) the impact of globalization is a central issue affecting rural community colleges. Recognizing this trend, in 2011 the American Association of Community Colleges (AACC) adopted a recommendation that notes "...global competency is critical to both the Completion Agenda and the education of the total person." Global issues are recognized as vital by professions as varied as nursing (Clark, 2012), and chemical engineering (Jenkins, 2012). Local communities are affected as enrollments of recent immigrants rise (Nica, 2012), and colleges scramble to adjust.

Community colleges are affected by globalization trends depending on how responsive they are to local needs, and how much understanding they have of the interrelatedness of local businesses, populations, social trends, and changing curricula with groups and cultures on a global scale. The impact is seen on campuses transformed by international students (Central Wyoming College), by students participating in international programs and partnerships (Northwestern Michigan College), and by the needs of regional businesses (Houston Community College System).

Among the leadership issues regarding globalization are these: communicating effectively the values of global focus to the local community, encouraging global issues in a transformed curriculum, and responding to the new competition for students and for faculty talent. The challenge of these issues is that each may conflict with how a community culture sees itself; the essential

“The challenges faced may differ for each college but what does seem clear is that each is likely to find global faces in the college’s local spaces.”

“Simply put, the definition of community is changing, becoming broader and more international.”

leadership response needs to be helping the community and its college see themselves in an expanded role, as a link to businesses and markets beyond their close borders, and to encourage risk-taking by all stakeholders. The challenges faced may differ for each college but what does seem clear is that each is likely to find global faces in the college's local spaces.

Has your organization considered...

- ◉ *What does it mean to be a globally competent learner? What is required from community colleges to produce globally competent learners?*
- ◉ *How are curricula, learning activities, student exchanges, and faculty development impacted by globalization?*
- ◉ *How does your college define 'community'?*
- ◉ *Are you preparing students to be successful employees at businesses that view the world as their marketplace?*

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Being a President

By Margaret B. Lee, PhD

President

Oakton Community College, Illinois



THERE'S NOT A WEEK THAT GOES BY that does not bring a post or link in *The Chronicle* or *Inside Higher Ed* about the shallowness of candidate pools for the presidency and the ever-growing, ever-changing skills and competencies required for the role. One of the most recent is *CRISIS AND OPPORTUNITY: Aligning the Community College Presidency with Student Success* (Achieving the Dream, Inc., & The Aspen Institute, 2013). The lengthy lists of what presidents need to know, and must be able to do, expand exponentially. While there are clearly skills and knowledge that have long been essential in the portfolio of a president, there is no job training package that prepares a person to be a president.

What then does equip a president for this role, this work, this vocation? I am convinced that for presidents, as for students, the old academic competencies are the essential vocational competencies: critical literacy; fluency in oral and written communication; numeracy; information literacy; analytical and evaluative ability; and the capacity to synthesize, generalize, and solve problems. Without these competencies, how can a president lead an institution whose core mission is to prepare those it serves for lives of work and learning?

While presidential searches may implicitly include competencies in the familiar lists of required and desirable qualifications for prospective candidates (the ability to budget; lobby; manage; plan; negotiate; build; fundraise; work with businesses, industry, school districts, and other colleges and universities; serve on boards; facilitate partnerships; meet increasing demands for accountability; understand the impact of change in content, delivery, and certification of curricula; promote the access, affordability and

“There is infrequent acknowledgement that a president does not lead alone. At the core of leadership is the building and nurturing of relationships both within and outside the college community.”

attainment for students; and lead the institution), rarely is there either explicit or implicit acknowledgement of how a president is expected to carry out the multitude of responsibilities of the chief executive officer. There is infrequent acknowledgement that a president does not lead alone. At the core of leadership is the building and nurturing of relationships both within and outside the college community.

The work of leadership requires courage, and is rooted, as is the word courage itself, in the heart. We need to know others and let ourselves be known (Palmer, 1993/1995). I have learned that in the presidency, as in the classroom, we are our own first texts. We serve our institutions as we teach our students with who we are and how we act even more than with what we know. We learn leadership, as we live and how we live, “in the crucible of work” (Shugart, 2013). I am ever mindful of the wise words spoken at my inauguration by my colleague with whom I taught Shakespeare for many years, words about how to be what I was about to become:

I wish you community: a mirror that does not flatter; friends who speak the truth; and counselors that feelingly persuade you who you are. I wish you evenings in the tavern with John Falstaff, a long memory of your days as a student, a teacher, and a vice president; and voices in motley to remind you of our common lot in life. I wish you clear vision to plan; keen hearing to attend and learn; a sure touch to execute; a good nose for what stinks; and a taste for adventure. I wish you eloquence to persuade, a skill in battle, courage to say what’s right, and grace to compromise. In this community you are both

*peerless and rooted, unique and connected. May
you grow strong, and may we all grow together.*

Our colleges are communities of common purpose where we are commissioned to share in work that is ultimately meaningful: enabling our students to make their lives as well as their livings. Being a president is more than a job. The president is “the living logo” of the institution – even in the grocery store (Riesman, 1996). A president is called to serve with her whole self. Being a president takes nothing less.

*Yield who will to their separation,
My object in living is to unite
My avocation and my vocation
As my two eyes make one is sight.
Only when love and the need are one,
And the work is play for mortal stakes,
Is the deed ever really done
For heaven and the future’s sakes.*

(from “Two Tramps in Mud Time,” Robert Frost)

*“Our colleges are communities of
common purpose where we are
commissioned to share in work that
is ultimately meaningful: enabling our
students to make their lives as well as
their livings.”*

Has your organization considered...

- *Are you cultivating leadership qualities throughout all levels in the organization—are leaders driven by a core set of values?*
- *Are desired leadership attributes and values modeled at the highest levels of the organization through words and deeds?*
- *Is your college addressing succession planning for key positions throughout the organization?*
- *Do leaders in the organization possess a “heartfelt” leadership philosophy that builds upon the organizational philosophy — is it demonstrated in student-centered policies?*

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Accountability and a Culture of Caring

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MANY HAVE WRITTEN ABOUT THE PERCEIVED FAILURES and/or need for transformation of higher education (Keeling & Hersh, 2011; Pusser & Levin, 2009; Arum & Rokhsar, 2010). It is in part in response to these critiques that accountability expectations have accelerated. For many the term accountability is negative, even threatening. For others, accountability portends hope. How one views the topic is clearly a matter of perspective. The term is straightforward, yet the implications are many. Merriam-Webster (2013) defines accountability as "the quality or state of being accountable, especially: an obligation or willingness to accept responsibility or to account for one's actions."

One common interpretation of accountability is that it is an external mandate. External forces include accreditors, legislators, associations, and other public- and private-sector organizations. Each has different expectations for colleges. The following illustrates the types of issues that are of concern to stakeholders.

Accreditors set standards that call for colleges to ensure the quality of their efforts. With most community colleges espousing teaching and learning as primary, key among the evidence sought is data that demonstrates that colleges are achieving the intended outcomes. Accreditors are expected to hold colleges accountable for results, or so the theory goes, yet many question whether accreditors are performing this role adequately (Lederman, 2008), in part because the evidence of results is limited, and results that are known, such as employers' assessment of graduates' abilities, graduation rates, and achievement gaps, are often discouraging. Others describe



“There is much data available, but little of it provides stakeholders with information that is most important – information about the value and quality of the education provided.”

a fundamental tension between accountability and assessment (Ewell, 2009), expressing the view that one interferes with the appropriate commitments of the other, and that one is focused on compliance while the other should be designed for improvement. Nevertheless, there are many commonalities about what colleges should be accountable for, and

assessment is one method by which this accountability data may be collected on students' learning.

A variety of initiatives are seeking to reveal more about colleges' performance, including the Voluntary System of Accountability, Transparency by Design, The National Alliance on Student Learning and Accountability, and others. In 2013 the Obama Administration launched its College Scorecard that began to address some of the information they expect students and their families to be interested in, including costs and graduation rates. The non-profit Association of Trustees and Alumni has its own approach that examines the required general education courses and grades colleges on their curricular requirements. There is much data available, but little of it provides stakeholders with information that is most important – information about the value and quality of the education provided.

Legislators and the U.S. Department of Education have a slightly different take on the performance of institutions, as these entities and individuals look for higher college completion rates and reduced student debt. Central to their concerns are the costs of higher education, the level of debt incurred by students, default rates, and career prospects. Recently there has been discussion about the comparative values of higher education, suggesting that college

should lead to gainful employment (Halperin, 2013).

The 2009 entering class three-year graduation rate among community colleges nationally is just 29.2%; Michigan, Indiana, and Illinois are below that average. Michigan is lowest among neighboring states at 15.2% and ranks in the bottom five nationally (NCHEMS, 2012). A July 2013 report by *USA Today* reports on the 260 “red-flag colleges” whose graduation rates are lower than their default rates. Included on the list are many for-profit institutions as well as community colleges throughout the Midwest. Accreditors, in response to scrutiny, have heightened expectations; and an increasing number of colleges are subjected to harsher reviews, including the current accreditation status of the San Francisco City Colleges. Failing to meet accountability standards has potentially devastating consequences.

Despite the apparent seriousness with which this issue resonates nationally, there is scant evidence that supports the claims of higher education regarding the value of higher education, especially when contrasted with the costs of acquiring a higher education. So what is promising in this situation? For this writer, the fact that the questions are being asked is encouraging. The fact that stakeholders are paying attention is a sign that they care, despite how it may appear. Although their perspectives vary, the issues are vital. Stakeholders care about completion; they care about quality; and they care about learning. They are concerned about fiscal stewardship. The Strengthening College Opportunity and Performance project personnel concluded that “the challenge to American higher education is clear, yet this crisis of epic proportions has yet to spur an adequate response” (NCHEMS, 2012).

“A July 2013 report by USA Today reports on the 260 “red-flag colleges” whose graduation rates are lower than their default rates.”

It is vital for leaders to heighten the internal conversations around transformation, which must include developing an ethic of caring (Noddings, 1984). Each individual has a role to play in helping learners to be successful; producing data about achievement of outcomes; tracking performance of courses,

programs, and services; using data to inform improvements; and adopting evidence-based approaches for producing higher learning. Dating back to the work of Dewey in the early 1900s and continuing to this day, extensive research exists about new pedagogies that have proven to be more effective than those now prominent in higher education. Transformation is essential to address the concerns raised by those who are calling for accountability: “For many institutions this agenda will involve wrenching change and will require extraordinary leadership” (NCHEMS, 2012).

It is not just because others “care” (are holding us accountable) that we must commit to doing the important work of helping learners succeed. We who have assumed this immense responsibility to provide high-quality higher education are largely responsible (accountable). If we are engaged in the enterprise, we are obliged to care enough to do all that we can to produce the intended results. It is our ethical, moral, and professional responsibility. Accountability is one hopeful lever to provoke this response.

“It is vital for leaders to heighten the internal conversations around transformation, which must include developing an ethic of caring (Noddings, 1984).”

Has your organization considered...

- ◉ *Is internal accountability a fundamental part of your college's organizational culture? Is it, or should it be, part of a continuous improvement process?*
- ◉ *Have you approached accreditation processes as a means to an end...the end being an improved organization that successfully meets the stated criteria?*
- ◉ *What transformational leadership attributes are needed to initiate "wrenching change" as noted in the Delta Project?*
- ◉ *How do we create a culture of caring in our organizations?*

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It's the Value Proposition and Our Business Model

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A FUNDAMENTAL QUESTION FOR ANY ORGANIZATION, PROFIT OR NOT, IS: "What do we do for whom at what value?" The answers to this ultimately define the business model for the enterprise. This then informs the cost structure, the market, and the pricing and revenue practices for the organization. The current trend of students paying more, in absolute and proportionate shares of the cost to operate the college, has limits and may postpone answering

this fundamental question (College Board Advocacy & Policy Center, 2012). In community colleges, tuition alone does not generate enough revenue to create a positive net margin. There is a saying, "No margin, no mission."

The traditional revenue model for community colleges is different among the 50 states (Education Commission of the States, 2000). In Michigan, the original bargain was said to be one-third each for local, state, and student. Today, state funding is a combination of

"Building a financial model where significant portions of revenue come from sources not tied to volume is treacherous at best and encourages planners to shift revenue to sources they can impact – namely tuition."

“One of the largest risks our revenue streams face is that a significant portion is “subsidized revenue.” The sources of the subsidies are property taxes, state allocations, access to federal grants, access to almost unlimited loans, and private scholarships.”

legacy and a funding distribution formula adopted in 2007 (Jonasson, 2013). Local and state funds do not vary with enrollment, leaving tuition alone to rise and fall with the number of students served. Building a financial model where significant portions of revenue come from sources not tied to volume is treacherous at best and encourages planners to shift revenue to sources they can impact – namely tuition. The higher the percentage in this category, potentially the more stable the organization can become. Michigan institutions are relatively free to implement this shift. Other states preclude this from occurring because the revenue variables are controlled at a state system level.

In an attempt to create a positive net margin, colleges have followed business practices aimed at reducing costs and increasing productivity. We disaggregate the role of the faculty member, assigning jobs to lesser-paid individuals (adjuncts), substitute technology for physical facilities, shift operating costs to employees, implement differential tuition for high cost programs, limit accessibility to programs or the college, increase our fundraising capacity, and seek outside unrelated revenue. While these tactics help to mitigate short term fiscal issues, they tend not to create a sustainable positive margin model.

One of the largest risks our revenue streams face is that a significant portion is “subsidized revenue.” The sources of the subsidies are property taxes, state allocations, access to federal grants, access to almost unlimited loans, and private scholarships. Consider for a moment the direct or indirect impact of a reduction in

any of these subsidies. Such a reduction would force us to examine the fundamental question posed at the outset. It is not only a question of who will pay how much, but for what are they paying?

To prepare for this future, leaders must clearly articulate what we do for whom at what value. If we do not, others will and will do it poorly. We must look beyond the budget and beyond the numbers to identify the value proposition that will attract appropriate investment. We must create a culture that can absorb shocks, both internal and external, and that can adapt more quickly to changes in the operating environment. Whether we enjoy it or not, we may be caught in a conundrum. The public and the government wish to view us as a public good: non-rival, non-excludable, and unlimited. They execute policies in this framework. In reality, our tactical moves may be driving us to operate more as a private good. It is time for us to restate our compact with our publics.

Has your organization considered...

- ◉ *React to the phrase No Margin, No Mission...a phrase often used in business and less often in higher education.*
- ◉ *How much does your college depend on third-party funding such as financial aid to students? Is your future sustainability vested in subsidized revenues?*
- ◉ *Does differential tuition for high cost programs have a place at your college?*
- ◉ *In today's highly competitive environment, how can we ensure meaningful value to our students? Does your college distinguish itself in the marketplace?*

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The Sea Change in Academics — A Commentary



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AS HIGHER EDUCATION PROFESSIONALS SCAN THE VISTA of academic programming, one thing is apparent: *the world as we know it is changing*. The confluence of compelling factors – academic traditions, pedagogical shifts, curricular mandates, instructional technology, competency-based education, and the completion agenda to name a few – has prompted rigorous dialog causing many to challenge time-honored academic traditions: “Higher education has, unfortunately, had a long history of calls for significant change and of efforts to improve the quality and efficiency of what we do...Tradition is an extremely powerful force both within and outside of the academy” (Diamond, 2006). Academic tradition provides a rich foundation that permeates the culture of community colleges and yet, as we pave the way to the future, it can stifle creativity and innovation.

On many college campuses, conversations are erupting causing traditionalists to debate the merits of innovative responses to contemporary trends. Now more than ever “... community colleges are experiencing what some would call a Renaissance. They are increasingly being discussed as a viable and affordable alternative to traditional four-year schools, as students question the value of a pricey four-year college degree amid a recession and a tight job market” (Shugart, 2013). While Shugart’s comments offer great optimism, they can also create tensions within traditional organizations. Nowhere is this tension more apparent than in academic departments where issues such as academic vision, programming, faculty roles,



competency-based education, open-access learning, and multi-dimensional partnerships are causing thought-provoking dialog.

ACADEMIC VISION

A vibrant academic vision inspires an organization to new heights, particularly when it is coupled with collaborative and courageous leaders who instill a vision and culture of quality, relevancy, and creativity. While this may seem achievable, why is it that so

many leaders shy away from this challenge and immerse themselves in the status quo? Senge (1991) suggests that academic leaders must strive to develop a departmental vision that best serves all involved. They must cultivate new ways of thinking and talking in terms that are positive, vivid, strong, and perhaps most important, cooperative. Perhaps this is easier said than done. Future academic leaders must ask: *Do we have the will to make this happen?*

FACULTY

Faculty are at the core of the academic enterprise. Traditionally they have operated strictly within their own disciplines but this is changing, and will continue to change, in the near term. Respecting faculty's rich intellectual capacity and the college's investment made in them, academic leaders must engage faculty in shaping the future by examining the status quo, asking difficult questions, listening thoughtfully to the responses, and implementing value-added strategies. Such discussions may touch on these topics: How can we best integrate faculty into learning processes? Will their primary functions of content specialists, student advisors, and program advocates need to be disaggregated to insure their expertise is

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properly used? Will traditional methods of assigning faculty load provide for future needs? And, how can we best use and develop adjunct faculty in quality learning environments to ensure student success, curriculum currency, and financial viability?

To successfully answer these questions, faculty and staff must enjoy a shared vision – a vision that embraces all employees in the larger departmental vision that is driven by student success. Though this process may be daunting, and at times exhausting, the effort invested will reap powerful dividends. Future academic leaders must ask: Do we have the will to make this happen?

ACADEMIC PROGRAMS

Throughout academe, conversations are occurring to enhance academic program quality, course relevancy, and accessibility. Leaders are recognizing the financial and human resource challenges that result from offering a “plethora of programs” (D’Amico, 2013), certificates, and courses – realizing that a broad array of offerings is unsustainable in the long run. Additionally, academic leaders recognize that excessive program offerings can detract from overall academic quality, be counterproductive, and in some cases address only limited markets. Thus, the challenge for academic leaders is to develop effective and efficient programming

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“Thus, the challenge for academic leaders is to develop effective and efficient programming mixes that ensure academic quality, meet transfer institutions’ and employers’ needs, and demonstrate financial sustainability.”

mixes that insure academic quality, meet transfer institutions’ and employers’ needs, and demonstrate financial sustainability.

Many community colleges are reassessing the caliber of their curricula and adopting more streamlined academic programming. They realize that by focusing on programs that can be delivered well, exceptional programs can be offered while minimizing struggles of cost and currency. In a thoughtful and intentional manner, some academic leaders are shedding the revered concept that *community colleges must be everything to everyone*. But this can only happen when engaged and visionary leaders guide academic departments to a new reality – a reality based upon the values of quality, relevancy, and student success.

Never before has the academic challenge been as visible as in workforce readiness programs. According to estimates, by 2019 two-thirds of all job openings in the state of Washington will require at least one year of college, with thousands of these positions requiring education offered specifically at community colleges (Sonenshine & Kanter, 2013). To address the job readiness concerns expressed by employers, innovative partnerships must be cultivated to integrate dynamic curricula and work-based skills. Educators can no longer do this alone, not if we are to seriously assume the responsibility for creating a highly educated workforce in the communities we serve.

Needless to say, the challenges with academic programs abound. Refined leadership attributes such as vision, collaboration, wisdom, and relationship building are critical to the success of these initiatives. Future academic leaders must ask: *Do we have the will to make this happen?*

COMPETENCY-BASED EDUCATION

Competency-based education is recognized by policy makers and influencers in higher education as a viable and forward-thinking alternative for structured credit-hour credentials. The Center for American Progress recently released a white paper that found that competency-based education could be the key to providing quality postsecondary education to millions of Americans at lower cost (Bergeron, 2013). In a speech given in late 2012, U.S. Secretary of Education, Arne Duncan, referred to Western Governors University's competency-based degree programs, saying, "While such programs are now the exception, I want them to be the norm." Stop for a moment and think about what this could mean for community college curricula. How will competency-based programs be structured? What will it take to transform conventional programs and will the revered credit hour be replaced? And, how will competency measures be evaluated while preserving academic integrity and faculty oversight? Future academic leaders must ask: *Do we have the will to explore, and potentially implement, competency-based education?*

LEARNING ACCESS AND DELIVERY MODELS

Delivery modalities are changing at lightening pace, primarily due to technology innovations. Many of these innovations make higher education more accessible to the masses significantly enhancing student success and completion rates. But not everyone is a supporter: "At the same time, misconceptions and myths related to the difficulty of teaching and learning online, technologies available to support online instruction, the support and compensation needed for

"In a thoughtful and intentional manner, some academic leaders are shedding the revered concept that community colleges must be everything to everyone."

“U.S. Secretary of Education, Arne Duncan, referred to Western Governors University’s competency-based degree programs, saying, ‘While such programs are now the exception, I want them to be the norm.’”

high-quality instructors, [coherent assessment plans,] and the needs of online students create many challenges” (Bonk, 2006).

Additionally, it is nearly impossible for academic departments and college leaders to analyze quality and sustainability of technology-based initiatives such as MOOCs, e-textbooks, and learning collaboratives such as wikis. Defining a college’s direction may cause consternation among traditionalists, yet their voices need to be heard and balanced within the academic vision. One thing seems most clear – major investment in technology-based curricula is a costly enterprise, and yet an imperative for the future. Future academic leaders must ask: *Can we provide the organizational vision and wisdom to balance technology with traditional delivery models, all while supporting student success?*

LEARNING ACCOUNTABILITY

Accountability is a prominent issue facing all of higher education. Major organizations, such as the Lumina Foundation and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, have committed millions of dollars to study and improve higher education performance. This is further intensified by the words of President Obama who has repeatedly noted that community colleges are the country’s engine for success in producing a knowledgeable workforce. Taking further action, he has proposed performance measures for all of higher education. To the point, external stakeholders are examining effectiveness and efficiencies like never before, both on macro and micro levels.

In response, new models have emerged such as Lumina’s The Degree Qualifications Profile; this framework illustrates what students should be expected to know, and be able to do, after earning a degree regardless of their major or specialization.

Appropriately, internal accountability within community colleges – from board rooms to classrooms – is becoming more prevalent as the ongoing struggle for productivity and financial resources intensifies. Within academic divisions, leaders are recognizing that quality and accountability are the way of the future. Astute leaders promote the value that accountability can bring to the institution. If positioned well, accountability standards may be more than adhering to external mandates; they could serve as the foundation for significant continuous improvement strategies embedded within academic divisions. Future academic leaders must ask: *Do we have the will to make this happen?*

THE CONTINUUM OF LEARNING

Community colleges are guided by a broad mission serving lifelong learners on a continuum of learning, and often this mission expands to new horizons. Some may call this mission creep. Such may be the case with developmental education and baccalaureate degrees.

Approximately 50% of all students enter post-secondary education without the basic skills necessary to succeed (Fern, 2013). Predictably, recent policy initiatives are making developmental education optional at the college level, assuming that high school diplomas qualify students for collegiate-level studies (Fain, 2013; Barron, 2013). The director of the Wyoming Community College Commission believes that the state should require remedial courses

“If positioned well, accountability standards may be more than adhering to external mandates; they could serve as the foundation for significant continuous improvement strategies embedded within academic divisions.”

“Isn’t it time to reclaim our role in higher education and find effective, creative, and learner-friendly ways to address underprepared students, without jeopardizing our identity?”

for affected students while still in high school rather than waiting until they enter college (Trib.com, 2013). This growing crisis of students arriving at colleges unprepared to do college-level work has, in some ways, positioned community colleges as developmental education institutions. Arguably, developmental education has diluted our role in higher education, fragmenting our attention and focus on collegiate offerings courses. Isn’t it time to reclaim our role in higher education and find effective, creative, and learner-friendly ways to address underprepared students, without jeopardizing our identity?

With this in mind, it is imperative that academic divisions devise strategies for student success, particularly if community colleges are to maintain an open door mission. Such a strategy may follow a two-pronged approach. First, academic leaders must be committed to collegiate expectations, course pre-requirements, and academic rigor. Also, they must provide innovative means to achieve this – means such as MOOCs, emporiums of learning, and pre-collegiate institutes. Students must fully understand collegiate requirements, see themselves as active participants in their learning, and share in the responsibility for their success. Second, academic leaders must forge working partnership with K-12 colleagues. Progressive community college leaders have learned that better collaboration with local high schools may be the best way to dramatically reduce the number of students who require remedial coursework (Fain, 2013).

At the other end of the spectrum, and driven by the community college mission to make higher education accessible to local communities, many institutions have sought to respond to community needs for baccalaureate and graduate education. At the risk of mission creep, many community colleges have found

innovative solutions such as creating 3+1 university partnerships, brought an array of higher education institutions to their campuses via University Centers, and/or ventured into offering community college baccalaureate degrees in workforce-related disciplines.

Academic leaders will be asked to guide their organizations to find an ethical and appropriate balance between both ends of the learning continuum – in developmental education and in baccalaureate studies. If accountability and student success are primary drivers for community colleges, then focusing on the mission is critical, and the implementation of the mission may change from one organization to another. It will not be *one size fits all*. Future academic leaders must ask: *Do we have the will to make this happen?*

FINAL THOUGHTS

In a highly competitive arena, higher education professionals are moving from teaching to learning-centered models. Faculty and staff are collaboratively working to seek input from external sources, identify coherent learning objectives, set quality standards, design responsive curricula, assess the impact of their efforts on student learning, reflect on results, and implement appropriate changes to increase student learning. Faculty roles and responsibilities are being revisited. Assessment is becoming an integral component of this learner-centered approach and embedded in the fabric of our colleges. The community college mission, and its implementation, are prompting meaningful discussions in many organizations. The

“Students must fully understand collegiate requirements, see themselves as active participants in their learning, and share in the responsibility for their success.”

“The transformation of community colleges is indeed occurring in pockets...now we need to make this mainstream.”

transformation of community colleges is indeed occurring in pockets. Now we need to make this mainstream.

The challenges that face academic leaders are daunting and will require skilled leaders to pave the way enabling the entire community college organization to flourish. What will cause these changes to occur? It will require effective leadership, collaboration with faculty leaders, accountability, and board engagement. By numerous accounts, teaching and learning must be a primary goal of every organization, and this must be supported at every level both in words and action. Innovative strategies must be funded, monitored for success, and institutionalized once appropriate. In many ways, we must revert to our past as we look to the future; we must place academics at the core of our institutions, where it belongs. In the hopeful words of a future leader and doctoral student in the Ferris Doctorate in Community College Program, Matt Schmit (2013), shares:

Community college leaders are in a position to have a significant positive impact on future generations by meeting workforce demands, increasing the quality of education, and creating an environment that supports innovation. Similarly, leadership in community colleges can fall short of objectives by maintaining the status quo or pointing to obstacles such as decreased funding and high percentages of underprepared students. The stage is set for community college leadership to establish their legacy as incubators of social and economic growth in communities across the country. I look forward to the challenge set forth.

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Investing in MOOCs – Investing in Students



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COMMUNITY COLLEGE LEADERS FACE MANY SIGNIFICANT CHALLENGES. Funding pressures, student debt, open access, under prepared students, economic development, and workforce readiness are some of the issues that challenge these institutions. The recent explosion of Massively Open Online Courses (MOOCs) in colleges and universities has demonstrated the promise of educating large numbers of students at little to no cost to the student. These courses are available to tens of thousands of students at once with video lectures, discussion boards, and computer-graded or student-graded tests and assignments (Waldrop, 2013). The possibility that MOOCs can potentially solve a portion of the student readiness issue, and even the student debt issue, makes them worth investigating further.

Many colleges and universities have already stepped up to test this new model of online education. According to a recent report from the *Chronicle of Higher Education*, funding to support these experiments in open online courses has been significant (2013). Khan

“The possibility that MOOCs can potentially solve a portion of the student readiness issue, and even the student debt issue, makes them worth investigating further.”

Academy, which provides free video tutorials for K-12 topics, was supported with \$150 million from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation; EdX, a joint venture between MIT and Harvard, was launched with \$60 million from those two institutions; and Coursera, the for-profit MOOC platform, which has 62 college partners, was funded with \$22 million in venture capital (Holdaway and Hawtin, 2013). Coursera alone has supported 328 different courses and has signed up 2.9 million users since it started in early 2012 (Waldrop, 2013).

While MOOCs started in research universities such as Stanford and MIT, the conversation has begun to include community colleges but with some changes: using MOOC content for developmental courses; as study aids for placement exams; or as supplementary materials for in-seat classes, or in a ‘flipped classroom’ model. Four community colleges are among those recently awarded grants from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation to explore the use of MOOCs: Wake Tech Community College, Bunker Hill Community College, Massachusetts Bay Community College, and Cuyahoga Community College (Bradley, 2012; Fifield, 2013; Whissemore, 2012).

The intended use of the MOOC varies by institution. Wake Tech is using their MOOC for delivery of supplementary materials for their in-seat remedial math or for students to prepare for placement exams. It is free, fully online, and self-paced. Bunker Hill and Mass Bay are using their MOOC courses as part of a flipped classroom experiment. Students will take the MOOC content online but will also meet with faculty as a class twice a week to complete assignments.

“Wake Tech is using their MOOC for delivery of supplementary materials for their in-seat remedial math or for students to prepare for placement exams. It is free, fully online, and self-paced.”

“Skeptics point to questions of quality, outcomes assessment, verification of student identity, low completion rates, and determining a sustainable business model.”

Students at these schools will pay tuition and receive credit after successful completion of the course. Cuyahoga is using a MOOC in place of their traditional face-to-face developmental education math class. The hope is that this no-cost self-paced course in the MOOC format will allow students to prepare for college-level work at a faster pace and eliminate their need to pay for developmental classes which do not earn college credit.

Although the expansion of MOOCs has been rapid, the MOOC format has received a fair amount of criticism. Skeptics point to questions of quality, outcomes assessment, verification of student identity, low completion rates, and determining a sustainable business model (Fifield, 2013; Hyman, 2012; Waldrop, 2013). These concerns resonate with many who work in education. As one example, San Jose State University recently announced that they suspended five online courses in which more than 50% of the students failed the final exam (Farr, 2013). Also alarming are the results from a recent study by the Community College Research Center that found community college students who took online courses performed worse than those in face-to-face courses. Possible reasons why this occurred included lower levels of teacher presence, technical difficulties, and a possible lack of independent learning skills among community college students (Xu and Jaggars, 2013). Because MOOCs are often self-paced and without an instructor presence, it would seem they may potentially cause more problems than they solve.

The real question for community college leaders is how to use MOOCs to further the community college mission. The challenges of reaching the underserved and underprepared audiences are of great concern to community college leaders. Can MOOCs be used strategically for placement exam preparation or developmental

education to reduce student expenses and time to completion? Or, will MOOCs just further amplify challenges such as low persistence rates and the 'digital divide'? Hopefully these current experiments with MOOCs at the community college level will provide some enlightening answers.

Has your organization considered...

- ◉ *Does your organization see the rise of MOOCs (or the latest trend in learning delivery) as an opportunity, a threat, or both? Are you prepared to respond accordingly? How?*
- ◉ *Can you envision the integration of learning and technology five years from now? How might the faculty and staff prepare for this?*
- ◉ *Might the use of MOOCs in developmental education provide an innovative delivery methodology in a fully online, blended, or flipped classroom format?*

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***“One of the
community college’s
greatest strengths
lies in its ability to
meet the needs of its
respective community.
It is that unique value
position each college
possesses that can
yield dynamic best
practices that may be
replicated.”***

~ Alicia Booker

*Emerging leader and doctoral student at
Ferris State University, DCCL Program.
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Future Projections: Emerging Technologies Offer Opportunities and Challenges to the Instructional Process and Validation of Student Learning



By Mike Ennis, PhD

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INSTRUCTORS ARE CONFRONTED WITH NEW ADVANCEMENTS IN TECHNOLOGY on a daily basis; catalysts that ignite human engagement and motivation are being refined; application and simulation-based learning encourages higher-order thinking; instructors play a greater role in organizing learning opportunities rather than being the primary source of knowledge and experience; and as a result, instruction and learning are becoming unrestricted.

Compared to the many forms of post-secondary education, community colleges have unique missions and values. As a result, community colleges have often been called "democracy's college," the "open door college," the "people's college," and more recently, the "crisis college" (Pusser & Levin, 2009). Students attending community colleges represent a unique cross-section of learners with challenges, assets, and needs, such as a need for remedial education; minority and first generational issues; life experiences; both positive and negative encounters with past formal education; family commitments; financial limitations; and employment and age-related challenges (Achieving the Dream, 2006). The unique community college role and the diverse student body offer challenges to the structural responsiveness of community colleges to meet the needs of

“There is no doubt that the rate of emerging technology is and will continue to have a profound effect on instruction within community colleges.”

the students. Therefore, it is critical that community colleges embrace emerging technology to serve students more effectively.

There is no doubt that the rate of emerging technology is and will continue to have a profound effect on instruction within community colleges. Arthur Clarke (1951) noted, “If we have learned one thing from the history of invention and discovery, it is that in the long run – and often in the short one – the most daring prophecies seem laughably conservative.” Although Clarke was primarily a science fiction writer, many of his views can be applied to the development and application of instructional technology. Additionally, Thomas Edison was quoted in 1913 to say, “Books will soon be obsolete in the public schools. Scholars will be instructed through the eye.” It is interesting to note that “... instruction through the eye” would be facilitated through Edison’s new filmstrip projector and could be applied to the development of the future visual and audio technologies. There is no doubt that emerging technologies are having an extreme influence on instructional technology, how people learn, and how learning is applied, measured, and validated.

The U.S. Department of Education (2011) referred to the changes in instructional technology:

Technology is being used to support both teaching and learning, technology infuses classrooms with digital learning tools, such as computers and hand held devices; expands course offerings, experiences, and learning materials; supports learning 24 hours a day, 7 days a week; builds 21st century skills; increases student engagement and motivation; and accelerates learning. Technology also has the power to transform teaching by ushering in a new model of connected teaching. This model links teachers

to their students and to professional content, resources, and systems to help them improve their own instruction and personalize learning.

These trends highlight the ways technology can transform teaching and learning processes for community colleges, and identify several converging trends that have implications for how community college instructors might prepare for the next decade. These issues include the explosion of new information in all fields including information becoming digital, the new generation of learners, the emergence of new instructional technologies, and the accelerating rate of technical change (Robin, McNeil, Cook, Agarwal & Singhal, 2011). Robin, McNeil, Cook, Agarwal & Singhal have developed five recommendations for dealing with the technology change: (1) use technology to provide/support experiences for learners, (2) focus on fundamental principles of teaching and learning rather than learning specific technologies, (3) allocate a variety of resources to support the use of instructional technologies, (4) support faculty members as they adopt new technologies, and (5) provide funding and leadership to enhance electronic infrastructure (2011).

Among the challenges facing community colleges is the need to evaluate the effective use of technology and the capacities and openness of the institution to support and utilize these emerging technologies. A sample of the technologies that can be evaluated

“Among the challenges facing community colleges is the need to evaluate the effective use of technology and the capacities and openness of the institution to support and utilize these emerging technologies.”

“How can community colleges quickly evaluate, test, implement, support and consistently review emerging technologies to serve the institution?”

includes these: Learning Badges and their use in learning, Game Based Learning, Social Media in Education, Khan Academy, and Moodle along with many other applications.

- **Learning Badges:** Visual symbols representing the attainment of a skill or knowledge—similar to meeting the objective(s) of a course or training.
- **Game Based Learning:** Game Based Learning (GBL) is a branch of serious games that deals with applications that have defined learning outcomes. Generally they are designed in order to balance the subject matter with the gameplay and the ability of the player to retain and apply said subject matter to the real world (Paulson, 2013).
- **Social Media in Education:** The tailored use of social media such as Twitter, Facebook, Tumblr, LinkedIn, etc. to promote communication throughout the education process.
- **Khan Academy:** A structured online educational resource to support select instructional topics. The learning management system can be used to enroll individuals or an entire class for free.
- **Moodle:** An open source learning management system available for anyone to development and design an online course.

How can community colleges quickly evaluate, test, implement, support and consistently review emerging technologies to serve the institution? The factors to consider include the purpose of the technology, number of potential users, stability of the product, utility of the product over the range of platforms and operating systems, stage of product development, and ease of use.

Has your organization considered...

- ◉ *Take a moment, and as a leadership team, identify the generational differences that represent the technology competencies of your student body. Are you preparing for the intuitive competencies of the 2018 freshman class, as that is only five years away?*
- ◉ *Has your college fully engaged in connected learning based upon the available technology available to your students?*
- ◉ *Are faculty and staff given ample opportunity to evaluate, apply, and train in the latest technologies? Are incentives available to integrate these technologies in the curriculum where appropriate?*

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A Closing Thought – Is Health-Care Reform our Canary in the Mine?



By Timothy J. Nelson

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WHEN SYSTEMS ARE IN A TRANSFORMATIVE STATE, THE UNDERLYING ASSUMPTIONS that influence their operations and purposes must be examined and questioned. One way to do this is to look at organizations or industries with similar characteristics and determine what we can learn and/or project from their journey. Thus as higher education, in fact all of education, is faced with changing demands, changing demographics, technological advances, and changing expectations we can look for a similar industry. I have long believed this is health care.

Consider that the federal government in 2010 passed The Health Care and Education Reform Act. Looking at the health care reform component of this act and the sister Patient Protection and Affordability Act, it is worth asking “What if these changes are applied to education and higher education?”

A significant tenet of these acts is the shift in what hospitals and providers will be paid to do. Under our current system, hospitals are paid for performing procedures. Whether these are surgical, emergency room, radiology, or tests, there is an agreed upon billing process that differentiates the revenue received by the payer type. Insured, uninsured, Medicaid, etc. all pay different rates that are negotiated by the payer. The incentives now for the hospital are to be able to bill the maximum amount for the procedure while minimizing cost for the procedure.

In the future, the expectation is that the majority of payments will be received for creating a healthy community. Penalties for



“What if the government said, rather than pay you for procedures we are going to pay you for how well you establish and maintain an educated population with certain characteristics?”

readmitting patients for the same ailment within a 30-day period already exist and will be expanded. A shift in revenues will inevitably change the services some hospitals can provide. We already see acquisitions and consolidations in rural areas. Almost immediately, the portfolio of offerings is decreased and tighter transfer systems with metropolitan or regional facilities are established.

So, what if these same directions were applied to higher education? What are our equivalencies to hospital services? Our courses are procedures. We are paid by the credit hour for offering a class. While there is some differentiation in rates, it is not yet negotiated with the payer. We might think of our governmental subsidies as equivalent. Remediation can be thought of as re-admitting for a prior condition. Our discharges include transcribed learning as documentation. Our students are the patients.

What if the government said, rather than pay you for procedures, we are going to pay you for how well you establish and maintain an educated population with certain characteristics? At Northwestern Michigan College, we are looking through a lens that says, “NMC’s ultimate purpose is to provide our learners and communities with the skills, experiences, and values that will help them to create social and economic wealth during their lifetimes.” How would we measure those outcomes and the attendant activities? Would numbers of degrees, hours in class, and persistence to completion be the measures? I’m not sure.

Hospitals are struggling with traversing the gap from funding for procedures to funding for community health. They have been given notice and a number of years to deal with these unknowns. Should a similar set of directives be applied to higher education;

would we have the same luxury of time? It's questionable. With that in mind, leaders must monitor the health care transformations and prepare for similar outcomes. It very well could be our canary in the mine.

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***“Reforms begin
with a change in
perspective.”***

~ Pamela Lau

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ONE OF THE RECURRING THEMES MAKING THE HIGHER EDUCATION circuit these days is that *"Paris is burning . . . and higher education's leadership - including trustees, faculty, and most presidents - is pretending that nothing is happening."*

There is truth to this argument. The facts support the claims by many thoughtful educators that better economic times will not return higher education to the good old days, even if these lazy, hazy times are different than we remember them.

Indeed, it goes beyond the debate about how to create a climate for leaders who have the courage to lead. This crisis runs deeper than turning to the latest management hypothesis in vogue to "disrupt" the status quo. And it is certainly supported by shifting demographics, weakening admission numbers, soft admission yields, stratospheric tuition sticker prices, negative bond ratings, state and federal regulatory intrusion and a lingering recession to paint a dismal picture for American colleges and universities.

The reality is, of course, that the colleges and universities that survive will do so because they thought about their future rather than simply managed their present. Let's hope that the next wave of management solutions for higher education attacks the status quo by recognizing the strength of what underpins it. Let's pray that colleges and universities do more with less but also ask themselves the tough questions that strengthen them.

~Dr. Brian C. Mitchell



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ISBN10 - 0-9758727-9-6

ISBN13 - 978-0-9758727-9-6

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Ferris State University