

U.S. COMMUNITY COLLEGES

OPPORTUNITY CENTRAL FOR DEGREES, CREDENTIALS, AND CAREERS

The nation's community colleges help
nearly 13 million Americans climb the
ladder of economic opportunity.

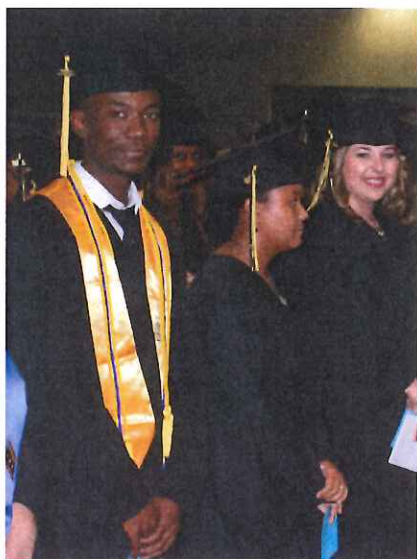
The success of these colleges
and the students they serve
benefits all of us.



Achieving the Dream™

Community Colleges Count

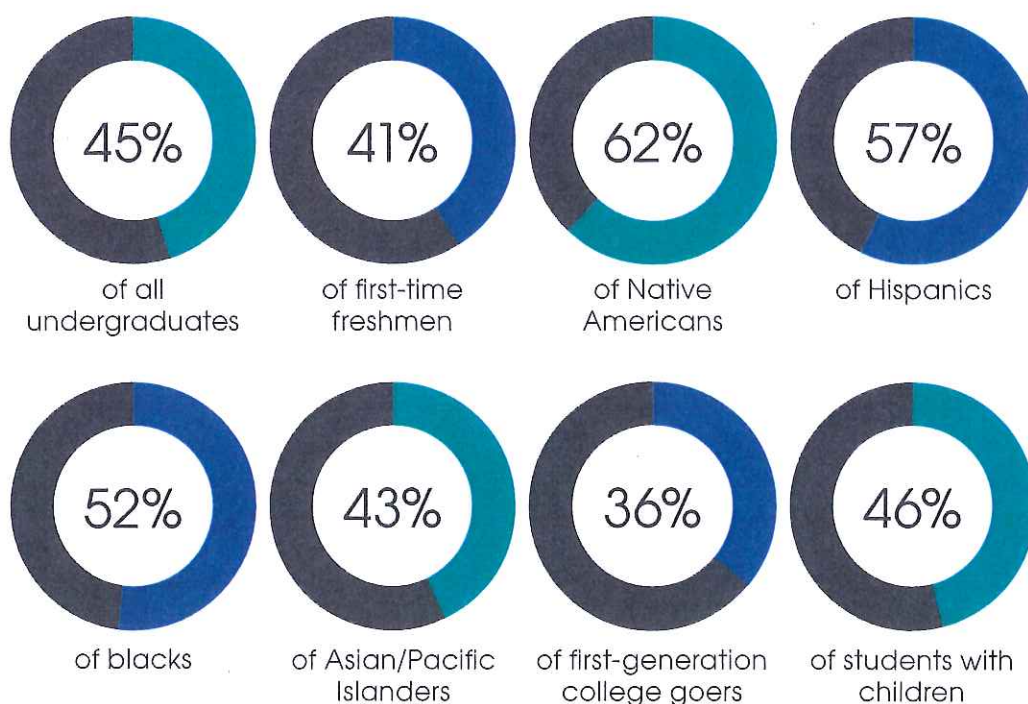
GIVING MILLIONS OF AMERICANS A FIRM FOOTHOLD TO THE MIDDLE CLASS



Community colleges help a growing number of people for whom higher education would otherwise be impossible gain a firm foothold in the middle class. In good economic times and bad, these colleges have held fast to their commitment to prepare students of all ages and backgrounds to learn and meet ever-changing workforce demands. These dynamic institutions change the life course of hardworking students by meeting them where they are and putting them on track for credentials and degrees—the ticket to good jobs that pay a living wage. They prepare the nation's workforce by developing talent for local businesses and growth industries and they play a significant role in revitalizing communities.

By the Numbers: Community Colleges Educate Large Percentages of Key Groups in Higher Education

The nation's nearly 1,100 community colleges educate almost half of all students in higher education and the majority of students of color. Their students make up:



SOURCES: 2016 Fact Sheet, American Association of Community Colleges; "4.8 Million College Students are Raising Children," Institute of Women's Policy Research (2014)

COMMUNITY COLLEGES ADDRESS SOME OF THE NATION'S BIGGEST CHALLENGES

“In the coming years, jobs requiring at least an associate degree are projected to grow twice as fast as jobs requiring no college experience. We will not fill those jobs — or keep those jobs on our shores — without the training offered by community colleges.”

—PRESIDENT BARRACK OBAMA

Today, political, business, philanthropic, and community leaders look to community colleges to address some of the biggest challenges in the nation and in every community. Community colleges, too, are challenging themselves to:

- **Raise earnings and boost the economy.** Students who earn associate degrees are likely to earn \$423,000 more over their lifetimes than those who only have high school diplomas.¹ A 2012 study—*Where Value Meets Values: The Economic Impact of Community Colleges*²—reveals that former community college students generated \$806.4 billion in added income to the U.S. economy. Expanding the middle class by helping more postsecondary students succeed is the best way to reduce equity gaps in our society.
- **Keep higher education affordable and serve more middle-class students.** With rising college costs and increasing student debt, more middle-class families are turning to community colleges as a low-cost first step to a baccalaureate degree. Tuition at community colleges, on average, is one-half that of public four-year institutions.³ In addition, community colleges play a crucial role in preparing students for middle-skill technical and scientific careers and responding to employer needs in such rapidly growing fields as health care, business, and technology.
- **Offer flexibility, convenience, support, and high-quality instruction to help working adults complete credentials and degrees.** Community colleges are flexible, scheduling classes at convenient times, locations, and online to help working adults learn when and where it is most beneficial for them. With smaller budgets than those of four-year institutions, community colleges invest a larger percentage of dollars into teaching

Economic Benefit of Community Colleges

Net total impact to the U.S. economy (2012)

\$809 billion

Community colleges yield \$6.8 for every \$1 of public investment



| | |
|-----------------------|------------------------|
| Public sector support | \$44.9 billion |
| Taxpayer benefits | \$304.9 billion |

SOURCE: The Economic Impact of Community Colleges, EMSI, 2014

than any other sector. Their core full- and part-time faculty are highly qualified and include a large cadre of practicing professionals who link academic and experiential learning that is closely aligned with the needs of employers in their fields.

- **Help the nation regain the lead in education.** A generation ago, the United States was first in the world in the proportion of adults with postsecondary certificates or degrees. Today, it's near the middle of the pack. Boosting the number of Americans with postsecondary credentials is critical to global competitiveness—and will require ushering far more non-traditional, first-generation students, and students of color to collegiate success.

As income disparity in the nation grows and states and localities still struggle to fully recover from the 2008 recession, community colleges working with tight budgets are more challenged than ever to meet the needs of adult workers and help local economies revive. Never has the contribution of this sector been more essential.

COMMUNITY COLLEGES FACE GROWING CHALLENGES

Lifetime earnings with
associate degree

\$1,727,000

Lifetime earnings with
high school diploma

\$1,304,000

SOURCE: Center on
Education and the Workforce
Georgetown University, The
College Payoff (2011)

AVERAGE COSTS OF COLLEGE

Public two-year college
(in-district students)

\$3,347

Public four-year college
(in-state students)

\$9,139

SOURCE: College Board, 2016

In recent years, community colleges have made a significant shift in their missions. As open-door institutions in the 1980s, '90s, and early 2000s, their goal was to expand enrollments at low cost, especially to underserved, low-income students and people of color. Now, the mission—and it is an urgent one—is focused on completion. That is, to ensure that more of their increasingly diverse and often low-income students earn credentials or degrees leading to jobs that pay family-sustaining wages.

The shift requires all community colleges to radically rethink and redesign how they operate and ensure they are placing students at the center of all they do. Community colleges need to provide academic and non-academic supports. They need to integrate technology systems with student advising more effectively to track student progress and improve academic decision-making. They need help expanding tutoring, mentoring, and career services to advance student success. And they need

support for strategic counsel, coaching, and technical assistance to strengthen all aspects of the institution—from leadership, data use and planning to teaching and learning—and to address equity challenges.

Nearly 200 community colleges are working to make these changes in partnership with Achieving the Dream, a national organization that seeks to expand the number of colleges thinking through what works, what doesn't work, and why. Collectively, they form a vibrant learning community seeking to support innovation and student success at scale.

Whether working directly with individual colleges in your area or supporting local community colleges to become part of the ATD network, you can be part of the movement to strengthen student success nationwide. Supporting community colleges is an investment in talent and community that pays off many times over in individual earnings, social mobility, job creation, and economic growth.

Endnotes

1 Carnevale, A. P., Rose, S. J., & Cheah, B. (2011). *The college payoff: Education, occupations, and lifetime earnings*. Retrieved from <http://cew.georgetown.edu/collegepayoff>.

2 Economic Modeling Specialists Intl. (2014). *Where value meets values: The economic impact of community colleges*. Washington, D.C.: American Association of Community Colleges.

3 U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. (2015). *Digest of Education Statistics, 2013* (NCES 2015-011).



Achieving the Dream™

Community Colleges Count

FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT ACHIEVING THE DREAM:

Visit www.AchievingtheDream.org
or contact us at info@AchievingtheDream.org or call (240) 450-0075