

Eight Important Questions for Eleven Community College Leaders: An Exploration of Community College Issues, Trends & Strategies

by the SOURCE on Community College Issues, Trends & Strategies

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About This Report

This report is a synthesis created from in-depth interviews conducted via telephone and email by George Lorenzo, editor-in-chief of the SOURCE on Community College Issues, Trends & Strategies, with eleven community college leaders from across the country. All eleven interviewees were asked eight broad questions.

The organization of this report starts with brief bios of the eleven interviewees followed by a listing of each question with results. Each question includes a synopsis about the overall responses provided along with some (not all) of the verbatim responses collected and analyzed.

Table of Contents

Interviewees	2-3
Question 1 - College Readiness	4-5
Question 2 - Remedial Education	5-6
Question 3 - Workforce Development.....	7-8
Question 4 - Educational Technologies.....	8-9
Question 5 - Student Services	10-11
Question 6 - Data Analysis.....	11-13
Question 7 - Funding/Grants.....	13-14
Question 8 - The Future.....	14-18
Support from Western Governors University	19
About the SOURCE	20

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Interviewees

Donald Cameron, President of Guilford Technical Community College

Donald Cameron was named the sixth president of Guilford Technical Community College (GTCC) in 1991 after having served as interim president from August 1990. Cameron served as a high school teacher and coach at Union Pines High School in Cameron, NC, as director of continuing education at Central Carolina Community College in Sanford, as vice president for academic affairs at Spartanburg Technical College in Spartanburg, SC, and as executive vice president of GTCC for nine years.



Gerardo de los Santos, President and CEO of the League for Innovation in the Community College

Gerardo de los Santos previously served as interim president and chief executive officer and vice president and chief operating officer of the League for Innovation in the Community College. During his tenure with the League, de los Santos has helped shape the comprehensive strategic direction of the organization and has authored numerous publications that cover a wide range of topics, including leadership development, fundraising, technology, community building, homeland security, and accelerated degree programs.



Ed Gould, Superintendent and President of Imperial Valley College

Ed Gould's background in education includes serving as the associate dean for higher education and corporate programs in the School of Education at Capella University. His community college background includes serving as the vice chancellor of student services and special programs for the Chancellor's Office of the California Community Colleges, president and superintendent of three California Community Colleges, and vice president and dean of student services at three other community colleges in California and Nevada.



Lee Lambert, President of Shoreline Community College

Lee Lambert came to Shoreline Community College (SCC) in January 2005 to serve as vice president for human resources and legal affairs. Prior to coming to SCC, he was vice president for human resources and legal affairs at Centralia College. He has served as special assistant to the president for civil rights and legal affairs at The Evergreen State College. He was also an adjunct professor who taught courses on law, civil rights and social justice, and employment law.



Wright Lassiter, Chancellor, Dallas County Community College District

Wright Lassiter joined the Dallas County Community College District (DCCCD) as president of El Centro College in August 1986. He served as president of Bishop College, president of Schenectady County Community College, vice president for finance and administration at Morgan State University, and director of auxiliary enterprises/business manager at Tuskegee University. He also served as Commissioner for the United States Commission on Minority Business Development.



Mark Milliron, Deputy Director for Postsecondary Improvement with the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation

Mark Milliron is helping to lead efforts to increase student success in the U.S. postsecondary education sector. He is an award-winning leader, author, speaker, and consultant well known for exploring leadership development, future trends, learning strategies, and the human side of technology change. He works with universities, community colleges, K-12 schools, corporations, associations, and government agencies around the world. In addition, he serves on corporate, nonprofit, and education boards and advisory groups.



Interviewees

Terry O'Banion, President Emeritus and Senior League Fellow of the League for Innovation in the Community College

Terry O'Banion was president of the League for Innovation in the Community College for 23 years when he retired on December 31, 1999. Under his leadership, the League became an international organization serving over 650 colleges. He was named a Senior League Fellow and directs the international Learning College Project for the League. He has consulted in more than 600 community colleges in the United States and Canada. O'Banion has written 12 books and 126 articles about community colleges.



John Roueche, Professor and Director, Sid W. Richardson Regents Chair in Community College Leadership, University of Texas at Austin Community College Leadership Program

A nationally recognized authority in community college education, John Roueche has written 35 books and over 150 chapters and articles. He has spoken to more than 1,300 community colleges and universities since 1970. He has received numerous awards and honors over four decades of service. As the Sid W. Regents Chair in Community College Leadership, he is noted for being honored with the first endowed faculty position in the field of community college education.



Sandy Shugart, President of Valencia Community College

Sandy Shugart blends two careers, one as a college president, another as a poet and singer/songwriter. He says they nourish each other, his "day job" giving him the material that is turned into ballads and folk-rock licks of life, work, growing, and growing old. He is currently president of one of the nation's largest community colleges. He previously served as president of North Harris College and vice president for program services and chief academic officer for the North Carolina Community College System.



Thomas Snyder, President of Ivy Tech Community College

Thomas Snyder serves as president of the nation's largest singly-accredited statewide community college system and the largest institution of higher education in Indiana. Appointed in 2007, he leads the strategic, academic, and operational processes of Indiana's largest and fastest growing college serving more than 200,000 students annually at 23 campuses and 100 learning centers.



Linda Thor, Chancellor, Foothill-DeAnza Community College District

Before taking on her current position in February 2010, Linda Thor served as president of Rio Salado College for more than 19 years. Known as the college without walls, Rio Salado has grown to serve more than 60,000 students a year. Under her leadership, Rio Salado has become a national model for delivering quality online education. Thor has also served as president of West Los Angeles College and has taught as an adjunct faculty member in graduate education programs at Pepperdine, UCLA, and Northern Arizona University.



Questions and Answers

1. ***Do you think community college educators, in general, have a clear consensus among each other about what it really means to be college ready, and do you believe that the typical testing being applied to incoming community college students measures whether or not they are college ready?***



Question 1 Brief: The systems in place at many community colleges to identify whether or not an incoming student can realistically be considered ready for college are not exactly working very well. Plus, there seems to be no real consensus of what it means to be college ready, at least from the testing point of view. “Current testing for college placement has been found to be woefully lacking in the ability to place students accurately in remedial courses,” said O’Banion, referring to research published in the [Community College Research Center’s Assessment of Evidence Series](#). “The current assessment systems are not cutting it,” added de los Santos.

“I would say that people are all over the waterfront with a response to that question,” noted Roueche.

Lassiter explained that the DCCCD is exploring the development of new diagnostic tools that can identify academic and skill deficiencies at a more granular level in order to provide more modular, accelerated remedial education as opposed to the full-semester remedial courses that typically frustrate students and cause them to drop out.

Milliron: A lot of energy’s going into the adoption of the [Common Core State Standards](#), and a lot of high schools are going to revamp their curricular pathways. We need to make sure that there is a sync between higher education expectations and high school reform. We don’t want another generation of students to graduate meeting all the requirements of a high school but still needing remedial education for college. Right now there’s not a great consensus around that, and people are working towards greater consensus.

The weakest link is where people are trying to get there with the cognitive measures around math or reading and writing. I think the bigger challenges are around non-cognitive expectations and academic tenacity expectations that may determine whether a student is or is not really ready for college. I think that’s the tougher work, and the testing side is really difficult to get at that.

Thor: I think people say someone is college ready if they do not need remedial classes. I think that tests are a measure, but not the only measure. Tests should be used as a guide for placement. The faculty member’s judgment also needs to be there because we find that students place into remedial classes, but it may be that there were only certain modules of a larger course that they really needed. They really could be successful at the next level. So, the placement tests should only be the first step in determining what a student may need.

Other things need to be looked at as well, particularly if you’re talking about a traditional 18-year-old coming out of high school. What was the rigor of the curriculum they had? Did they have success in college prep or college-level courses taken in high school, which is so common now with dual enrollments? Also, it’s obvious that we have some students who are just not good test takers, and it’s not necessarily a reflection of their college readiness.

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We’ve had this wild pendulum swing from expectations of a broadly educated, reasoning, problem-solving, scientific-thinking, literate adult at the point of graduation from high school to a reductionist model of having a handful of skills that makes them somewhat employable and ready to take freshman-level classes.

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reductionist model of having a handful of skills that makes them somewhat employable and ready to take freshman-level classes. And I don't think that conversation is even being held meaningfully right now. I know that a faculty member teaching introduction to philosophy would hope for something closer to the former than the latter. But my guess is that almost all of the national reform efforts now being produced are focused on a reductionist model of expectations.

Lambert: I don't know if we have a clear consensus. I think we can say here's what students need to know, but who's responsible for helping students acquire that knowledge? For example, I think folks would say soft skills, or some people might say personal-effectiveness competencies, and ask who is responsible for making sure the student has those skills and competencies, and is that part of being college ready. And then you get into the academic competencies, with math and English being the two biggies that pop out. Where is the math cutoff? Where is the English cutoff? I don't think we as a country have an answer to these questions.

[Regarding tests], it's you can come to my school and my cutoff score is one thing, but go to the school just up the road and their cutoff score is different. So, if the cutoff scores are a reflection of our consensus; we don't have consensus. And we don't all use the same instrument. Should there just be just one standard instrument with one standard cutoff score, right or wrong, whatever it is, that we all come to accept?

2. **What solutions seem to work best in getting remedial students on the right path to academic success and ultimately toward college completion, and how can educational technologies help in this area?**



Question 2 Brief: Specific examples were provided of successful remedial programs. Thor pointed to Foothill College's award-winning [Math My Way](#) program, a revamped way of teaching math that has resulted in the highest success rate in math courses in California. "Remarkably what's happened is that instead of students running away from Foothill College [because of remedial math challenges], they are running toward Foothill College because the word is out that this is where you go to deal with math problems," Thor said. The college is also working with the [Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching's Statway™](#) – a year-long, college-level statistics course targeted at developmental mathematics students. Nineteen community colleges are currently planning to implement Statway in the fall.

Shugart mentioned Valencia Community College's implementation of [Life Map](#), an online career development service that helps students become more engaged in the process of discovering their educational and career pathways. "It's a huge suite of tools that helps students get connected and figure out a direction," he said. "We are wondering now if it would be possible to create an entirely online course or a series of course experiences that we can give away to students as they approach college that would help them discern their purpose in coming or not coming to college."

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Lambert talked about the [Integrated Basic Education and Skills Training \(I-BEST\) program](#) that was developed by the Washington State Board for Community and Technical Colleges. I-BEST pairs workforce training with Adult Basic Education (ABE) or English as a Second Language (ESL) so students learn literacy and workplace skills at the same time. Adult literacy and vocational instructors work together to develop and deliver instruction.

Questions and Answers

El Paso Community College's efforts to improve its local high school students' college readiness, and hence decrease the number of enrollments in developmental courses, was noted by de los Santos as an exemplary program with "tremendous outcomes" (for more information see the [CCRC Report](#): "Collaborating to Create Change: How El Paso Community College Improved the Readiness of Its Incoming Students Through Achieving the Dream").

The [Global Skills for College Completion](#) project was also mentioned by de los Santos. Here technology is being used to create an online community of practice related to developmental education where faculty can share what's working or not working, "so they can increase the pass rate of students who are matriculating out of developmental education into college-ready education," de los Santos said.

Gould: Some learners have gone through the educational system with undiagnosed learning disabilities and find frustration when they get to college. In these cases, an individualized educational plan and intervention strategy based on the learner's disability works best. In other cases, the individual learned a skill in math, reading, or writing but did not apply the skill or had no need to sharpen the skill, so a tutorial approach, perhaps individualized, is best.

There is promise in mainstreaming these students with tutorial support. Also, online learning communities where a 'million people in the learning community are available to help an individual' have great promise. Immersion programs based on contextualized curricula focused on applied uses of reading, writing, speaking, and math skills with a developmental emphasis also have great promise.

Most importantly, no matter what the level of the deficiency, for a student to benefit from remedial or developmental education, the approach should be 'better, faster, and more effective' than traditional semester approaches to remediation. Remedial learners can get discouraged very quickly when they see a long developmental process of a series of classes in front of them before they are ready for college-level courses. This message often impacts the learner's self-concept and affirms that they have difficulty learning and therefore may not be 'college material.' All approaches need to engage the student effectively and in a timely manner so the learning process in itself is not discouraging.

Roueche: There are many things that are important. One is these students need more orientation than any other group of students. They're more likely to need a caring, available mentor than anybody else. They definitely need a careful assessment, and by careful I mean probably more diagnostic than just the broad benchmarks that we're now using. There needs to be placement requirements. I've been to so many colleges where if you don't read and write well you have to take remedial reading, but then you find out they can take twelve other hours before they have to take the remedial reading. Now you say, 'well what twelve hours do you have in your college where somebody that's functionally illiterate has a chance of passing?'

[Another concern is] ending late registration. We know that late registration is probably the most counter-productive academic policy ever invented by community colleges. Even people who didn't finish high school know that the first week is the most important week, and the first day is the most important day, and the first hour is the most important hour.

There is a lot of data now showing that students who enroll late have three times the dropout rate or three times the failure rate of students who begin on time. Class attendance is still the variable associated with success. You have to work hard with this population to get them in class on time, prepared. Teachers and counselors have to take a lot of responsibility for getting that positive behavior going with these students.

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3. **Although community colleges are well known for their workforce development efforts, how would you describe some of the issues that seem to prevent employers and community colleges from collaborating effectively to support workforce development? Are the cultures too diverse to build effective collaborative programs? What types of workforce development issues are working at your institution(s)?**



Question 3 Brief: A general consensus among the interviewees was that community colleges have historically been, and continue to be, highly effective and sought out partners with small and big businesses for the development of employee training programs, but there is still a lot to accomplish and enough barriers to overcome to keep everyone busy for a long time with fine-tuning and improving workforce development efforts.

Cameron explained how GTCC has “outstanding partnership relations with the companies in our area.” He added that GTCC has been successful in the area of workforce training and development through the utilization of a 40-year-old industry standard called the DACUM Process (Develop a Curriculum, from Ohio State University), whereby GTCC brings in key employees from local businesses who attend a day-and-a-half process to “identify the general knowledge and skills required of successful workers; the tools, equipment, supplies, and materials used; the important worker behaviors essential for success; and the future trends and concerns likely to cause job changes” (see [DACUM Process website](#)).

Lassiter talked about DCCCD’s recent progress in the area of workforce development through a \$450 million capital improvement bond program that has brought about the construction of new facilities at six colleges that are dedicated to workforce development. Two of the colleges, for example, have Entrepreneurship Colleges. In addition, [the Garland Campus of Richland College](#) is a DCCCD award-winning community campus focused on workforce training and development. Training is provided for individuals who are entering the workforce for the first time and for those currently employed who want to enhance their skill sets. “It is unique in that the total focus is on workforce development. The Garland Chamber of Commerce is housed there, thus enabling two significant stakeholders and players in the workforce development arena to work collaboratively,” Lassiter explained. “Because of that partnership, it was possible to form the Dallas Area Manufacturers Association with those two partners working with all of the manufacturing firms in the Garland area to foster programs and initiatives in the manufacturing arena. This has already met with great success.”

Snyder: It has been my experience in Indiana that employers clearly recognize that the community college is the best place to get workers trained, but my experience with employers has also been that the internal training dollars they would use both inside and outside is one of the first things to get cut in a downturn. [In addition], when working with employers, there is a need for them to set hiring standards that have established certifications so that they are bringing in workers with some training in advance. Some of the leading employers of the state like Caterpillar and Cummins are evaluating and adding things, such as a manufacturing certificate, which gives them some indication that a worker is better prepared.

de los Santos: I think there are a few barriers. I think we still have some perceptual challenges and communication challenges. For instance, we’re still hearing from the business community that they didn’t realize their local community colleges could provide the training they need to help re-skill their workforce, or to provide continuous education, or new training programs. There needs to be that continuous outreach and that awareness created with the business

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Questions and Answers

community about the roles that community colleges play in workforce training and economic development. That's one of the keys.

I think the other piece is that big employers, the national ones, are looking for a one-stop shop. They would like to go to one place and be able to get training for all of their national sites and then just be able to plug and play with that one entrance point and coordination point. We don't have that. You can't just go to one organization, you can't go to a community college and say, 'I would like to get a training program for my lab technicians and have 75 labs throughout the country; so, can you broker for us with every single college – and will it be the same quality, will it be the same consistency, and do we have all that articulated?' Right now, we don't have a system to do that.

Also, employers need to be telling us what they want, and they need to continue to make bigger investments in partnering with local community colleges so that we're able to provide the training that they're looking for. It's really a symbiotic relationship that we need to continue to work on.

4. ***How do you see the adoption of educational technologies, including the implementation of fully online and blended courses and programs developing at community colleges today?***

Question 4 Brief: Online education has become an integral part of the growth of community colleges, but not all community colleges have been able to implement sophisticated online learning programs at a large scale due to a lack of appropriate staff and support. Nonetheless, the flexibility factor that comes with offering online courses and programs, alone, is very attractive to the many working adults who enroll in community colleges.



Lambert, for instance, said that “today I don't think any college or university has an option not to have a virtual presence. So, the question is, what form does that take, and who drives that in terms of its full integration into a face-to-face campus that also allows for some really strong programming in the virtual space?” He also noted that Shoreline Community College is moving into the mobile space – iPads, smartphones, and similar mobile devices – by looking closer at how to deliver educational content and provide more access to the community college overall through mobile devices. In addition, Shoreline has a virtual college leadership team that is charged with “taking inventory of what we are doing and looking at where we can strengthen our gaps so that the things we are doing 100% online can become more readily accessible to students, not only from a local perspective, but from national and international perspectives.”

Milliron referred to an article he wrote, “[Online Education vs, Traditional Learning: Time to End the Family Feud,](#)” published in October in the Chronicle of Higher Education. “Let's stop having the conversation about what's better, online or face-to-face,” he said. “We need to start having some good conversations about what's the right mix of all the tools at our disposal that can be put together to help learning be more effective, and we need to be radically tough-minded about it.”

Thor: There's not even a question about whether institutions are going to do this anymore. The differentiator for me is whether or not colleges are taking a systemic integrated approach to online and hybrid or blended, or if they're using the craft model. I obviously have a bias, having been president of Rio Salado College for 20 years [where a systemic integrated approach is utilized].

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If you visited Rio Salado, you would not find a distance learning department because it is totally integrated into the college. It is what the college does. [But first] let me talk about the more common model, which I would call a crafts model. That is, for example, where you have an individual faculty member who is interested in putting, let's say, her English composition course online. She works usually by herself, and she puts her course up. It gets listed in the schedule, and students enroll, and she does virtually everything for those students. She's developed the content, she's reviewing the assignments, she's giving the tests, she's responding to their questions, and so on. She's the only one who teaches that course. Now, you may have a second faculty member in that English department who also wants to put her English composition course online. She will put up a different course, and then a third. And this faculty member only wants to teach five online English composition courses, and you may have demand for ten.

In the Rio Salado model a team is used. When they identify a need for an English composition course, a team is made up of content experts, of instructional designers, of technologists, and of student services people who will build it. They develop the best possible English composition course that they can, and that course is then supported by a system that includes a technology help desk, an instructional help desk, the built-in student services, a 24/7 reference library, etc. Then, depending on student demands, any number of faculty members will teach that course. So, in other words, they're not reinventing the wheel every time they need to add another section. The individual faculty member may augment the course, but the basic course is developed, including the assessments, which are then administered out of the testing centers. So the faculty member's role becomes that of a facilitator and guide and evaluator. They're not expected to be experts in the technology or online course design. That is frankly an infinitely scalable model which allows Rio Salado to start its classes every Monday. The traditional way that colleges have developed online courses is not scalable.

Gould: This year, for the first time in my more than 36 years in or related to public education, I read a report from a public agency that favors online education due to the cost savings. The California Legislative Analyst's Office publication, "[The Master Plan at 50: Using Distance Education to Increase College Access and Efficiency](#)," identified distance education as having many potential benefits to students, faculty, and the state.

While distance education is not applicable as a solution for every student, it offers much promise for the future to allow for more accessible and efficient learning opportunities and thus cut the cost of instruction and perhaps move towards standardized learning outcomes.

There are still many challenges for online education. Many institutions limit teaching of distance education to members of the full-time faculty and may have bargained through their collective bargaining agent for that limitation. Some accreditation bodies limit the amount of online instruction that can be offered.

The current recovering recession and declining public resources available to colleges certainly challenge the current way community colleges do programs. In California, a centralized or even regionalized approach to distance education is absent. While there are many well-developed online programs, each seems to have its own LMS, host, and course developers and designers. Few, if any, approach the cost effective, quality educational program offered at Rio Salado College. However, the possibility exists to change access and the cost of education in a large state like California. Having the non-partisan advisory to the California Legislature endorse that possibility gives me hope that the future of education rests in cyberspace.

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Questions and Answers

5. **What challenges are community colleges facing in regard to enhancing student services, and what kind of solutions are needed?**

Question 5 Brief: It's clear that budget cuts come down hard on student services and many community colleges cannot get student services and academic affairs to work together due to a kind of silo effect. Solutions to such challenges exist but have not yet been fully implemented.

Roueche noted that in Texas, as well as in numerous other states across the country, community colleges are looking at extraordinarily large shortfalls of funding that will result in job loss for a high number of faculty and staff at community colleges. "So, sadly, we are going to have to do a whole lot more with less," he said. "And the challenge is that the students who are coming to us now need help, especially on the student services side, perhaps more than any population in history."

Milliron mentioned an interesting facet of student services whereby some institutions are farming out student advisement services to technical paraprofessionals. He said that many of these advisers are "really good, but I think that if we are going to get completion rates up, we will have to get faculty much more deeply involved in the advising process and back into the lifecycle of student success. I think that is going to be an interesting conversation over the course of the next few years. It varies deeply by college [amount of faculty providing direct advisement services to students], but I think it is going to be one of those conversations about creating partnerships around structural advising and then academic advising to help that student on the road ahead."

The completion agenda will not succeed without high quality programs in admissions, orientation, assessment, placement, advising, registration, and financial aid – the territory for student services. But we can't get the student affairs people and the academic affairs people to really look at the entire institution and see what each side of the house can contribute.

— Terry O'Banion

tion, assessment, placement, advising, registration, and financial aid – the territory for student services. But we can't get the student affairs people and the academic affairs people to really look at the entire institution and see what each side of the house can contribute. Some colleges have done away with this problem by creating one office – a vice president for the college or a vice president for learning, for example – instead of having a separate vice president of student affairs and a separate vice president for academic affairs. Putting those two silos under one person is one way of trying to break down the differences between those two groups of people. They need to work collaboratively and bring the special skill sets that they each have to the table for the good of the students. But historically they have not done that very well.

Cameron: We'll get budget cuts from our legislators in which they say that you can't affect the classroom. We always hear that line; you can't impact the classroom. Well, if you do not have appropriate student services support for guidance, counseling, and helping people with their career paths, then it doesn't matter what goes on in the classroom – the students will not be successful. I believe the importance of student success is vital. When a student applies to GTCC, they complete an application, and the first individual they come in contact with is through student services, where they are advised, where they receive financial aid, where they're counseled. So, when legislators take a look at cutting student services, I have to say they are being short-sighted. They may not understand the holistic



approach to the success of students at a community college. But I'll also quickly say that some of that may be our own fault in that we have not educated the legislators to understand that. So we cannot put it all on them. Some of it is our fault as well.

Lassiter: One of the challenges we face is that we are seeing a somewhat different population of people who come to the college setting with a lot of baggage in terms of their preparation and in terms of various social issues they bring with them, including the possible baggage of loss of employment. So they are really coming to us asking for more help, and we are being challenged in terms of being able to provide that expanded support. We are taking the position, at least in Dallas, that we have to find ways to address those needs that students bring when they come to us.

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We've had pretty good success over the years with the so-called case-management approach largely stemming from the [TRIO program](#) (federal outreach and student services programs designed to identify and provide services for individuals from disadvantaged backgrounds). We are trying to do more of that. We are also capturing the view that students should not have an option for attending orientations. I'm making some major changes in our new student orientation where it is required. In a couple of colleges, new student orientation also involves family members, and it is working out quite well. We believe that there is just so much that we can do in providing services, and if we can involve the families, that might be helpful to some regard.

So far, we're not cutting money. Now specifically here, in an effort to address our budget challenge, our board has approved a voluntary retirement incentive. And the idea is that we are going to have a number of people meet the criteria for retirement. It's going to open up some opportunities for us to do some significant transformative reorganization. Providing expanded student services will be one of our high priorities when we get involved in this.

6. ***Do you see student assessment, course evaluations, and data analysis practices becoming increasingly more important and vital for community colleges to develop more effective institutional strategies, governance practices, and decision-making processes?***



Question 6 Brief: This is definitely the wave of the future, and it does come with its fair share of challenges. Gould noted that “for too long institutions responsible for providing outstanding research to the world have relied much too heavily on opinions to guide decision-making. Robust analytical tools exist today that can provide data on how well current academic and intervention strategies are working, what improvements might be needed, and help provide information that will allow leaders to decide on directions for the future.”

Thor said that “we are all becoming more assessment-oriented, more metrics-oriented, and hopefully more effective with analytics, particularly predictive analytics.”

“How do you really measure what’s going on?” asked Lambert. “Some students come to us for one or two quarters and then they are off to the university. Isn’t that success? So, how do we build a more robust system where we measure what’s really going on? You’ve got to have data, and it is making sure you have the right data. It’s making sure you have the right assessments that produce the kind of data you need.”

Questions and Answers

Referring to the demands of the completion agenda, de los Santos added that there will continue to be pressure to increase “the sophisticated use of data, of information, of analysis, and incorporating more sophisticated uses of analytical technologies. You need to ensure that you are not just swimming through an ocean of information. And how do you use the information so that you can make informed decisions in the classroom, in student services, in human resources? I think it is going to be a major pressure point because of what’s being demanded of the completion agenda.”

O’Banion: The first major evaluation of Achieving the Dream looked at 26 ‘Round 1’ colleges that had been working at this for five years, and they discovered that of the four major outcomes, one showed that about 20 percent of the colleges did not have the capacity to really do institutional research effectively (see [“Turning the Tide: Five Years of Achieving the Dream in Community Colleges”](#)). I think that is true. A fairly large group of community colleges do not have the capacity because they never funded it in the first place.

Secondly, community colleges typically use their institutional research capacity for compliance reporting, rather than for research that can help them improve their programs. They have to compile state and federal data reports for compliance reporting. So, they spend all their energy on compliance reporting rather than on gathering and analyzing data to improve learning. That is a key problem that we are seeing across the country. You cannot make the college completion agenda work unless you have a good and fully functional institutional research system, as well as good and fully functional student services. As this completion agenda moves forward, those two areas are so under-funded that in many cases they have become devastated.

Roueche: The bad news is when we try to get outcome data from an individual course, it’s almost impossible. If you wrote the academic dean of a college and asked what the outcomes are for a freshman English grammar and composition course – in other words, what will students be able to do, how are they assessed, etc. – you’d find that we’re still painfully behind in the identity and ascertainment of specific measurable or observable learning outcomes from individual courses. We’ve done very well with this in the work-related areas, such as in the allied health areas, where they’ve identified and they can quantify, either by measurement or observation, their outcomes. They’ve done it very, very well. That’s more and more the case in business and it’s more and more the case in the technologies, but when you get into the general ed core, the developmental ed core, we are way behind with anybody talking about specific outcomes.

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— John Roueche

Milliron: There’s still a lot to learn. A lot of issues are around the technology, the infrastructure, and staffing to be able to do this well. It’s also about trying to get cultures of inquiry within the colleges so they can actually use this data to be able to tune the learning experience. I think one of the bigger issues is also about people being willing to be tough minded about the data. Yes, it’s messy. Community colleges have such a broad mission and serve such a diverse clientele of people that really getting concrete with the data is difficult.

I think we have to get our arms around some key data points. Kay McClenney [Director of the Community College Survey of Student Engagement] talks about it all the time. Are we really happy with these success rates that we have? Can we innovate against these? I think we probably agree that

we can. We can find that there's room for improvement in everybody and every institution. So just try to figure out what your baseline is and figure out how you can use that as a tool to discern whether or not what you're doing and innovating against is actually working. I do think, however, that it's probably going to be a combination of quantitative and qualitative data. I'm also a big fan of student focus groups. I'm a big fan of asking students what they think in this process. I think we've got to make sure we add that to the mix.

7. ***Is it a challenge for most community colleges to effectively and actively pursue grants both governmental and foundation-oriented? What are the challenges and solutions in this area of concern?***

Question 7 Brief: Part of this issue is related to the higher education community not having enough graduate degree programs that bring more professionals into the field of funding management and grant writing at the community college level. "We need those people because that is one of the few options community colleges have to raise their own funds," said O'Banion. However, the challenge of adding on even experienced staff during tough times is a problem in and of itself.



Milliron added that there are great opportunities available through the federal government and through foundations. "There is probably more excitement around community colleges today than we have ever seen from these agencies," he said. "It is a time to get serious about it. The colleges that have done that, such as Sinclair Community College and Central Piedmont Community College, have very focused grant-writing operations. They have been successful at going after National Science Foundation and federal government grants."

Thor brought up the fact that while alternative revenue sources are more important than ever, the Foothill-DeAnza Community College District is being forced to operate at very lean levels, meaning that "there is not much bandwidth to take on grant writing and grant proposals. It's extremely difficult."

Roueche suggested that community colleges conduct workshops and training sessions, on a voluntary basis, that would alert and inform faculty of where support resources might exist for their specific programs. "These would not only be foundations, but also corporations and the federal agencies. Most community college faculty members have no idea where that kind of support might reside," Roueche said. "They need to run specific training sessions on how to write proposals, how proposals are evaluated and scored, how to make contact with foundations and corporations. We are going to have to do a lot more of this in the community college sector."

Shugart: It's certainly more competitive now, but I don't mind competition. I think the larger challenge for us now is that grant makers have rightfully demanded more about how big of a difference will this make and how will we know; they have become more evidence-based and more demanding. Those are two good things.

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— Sandy Shugart

What concerns me is that more and more grant makers want to make grants in a way that doesn't increase the capacity of the institution. They want to fund temporary costs for consultants and travel and things like that, which are helpful to us, but they don't help us to model and test interventions with risk capital and then leverage that to bring them to scale. We recently received a request to submit a proposal to a major foundation. The only uses of the money are travel and consultants, essentially, and attending their meetings. Our reaction to that was, we like these people, and we think this is good work, but it

Questions and Answers

creates a fair amount of hassle to fund things we don't think we need. I don't really want another ABCD visiting team. I want to take work we think will work and test it here. I can do that with my money. It would be helpful if I had more risk capital to do that. But there is a decreasing willingness to invest in institutional infrastructure, and the money gets diverted outside the institution to other resources. And sometimes they are helpful, but we have been involved over the past decade or so in the whole alphabet soup – everything that's come down the pipe for student improvement – and, the truth is, we're at the point now where the visitations by the coaches and the consultants distracts us from our work.

Cameron: The University of North Carolina Chapel Hill was established somewhere around 1794. GTCC was established in 1958. Well, they have a few years ahead of us on how to do that. And if you really become serious, the community college movement does not go back to 1903 to Joliet. It really didn't become serious until the 1960s. In the 60s, we were building about one college a week in the United States. We didn't really start truly maturing until about the 80s or 90s. So, regarding community colleges going after grants and foundations, we're like a Johnny Come Lately in that arena compared to our university colleagues. We have moved in that direction because of the economic circumstances we find ourselves in. We have increased our foundation staff in just the last two to three years simply because it is a necessity today due to the economic climate we find ourselves.

Snyder: We have a grant staff. I think this is an important issue, and we have been very active in this regard. We have active grants in excess of \$50 million. We have technology grants where we work with other colleges both in state and out of state. For example, we are a partner with Purdue, the lead in a battery grant. And we are the lead in a smart grid training grant where Purdue is our partner. That is one example. The DOE and the DOL are looking at these issues and are seeing the community college as a partner. We are a participant in a few of the TAACCCT grants. We are the lead in one and are partners in two others. That is an emerging trend, where we are going to encourage to work as consortia. I think that is going to be a game changer.

8. ***Please explain what you think are the most pressing issues and challenges being faced by community colleges today and what you think the future looks like five years from now.***

Question 8 Brief: As with any prognostication, responses to this question were fairly wide spread and varied. There were some refrains, however, such as keeping up with technology, the prospect of numerous community college leadership retirements coming soon, issues and challenges related to the so-called “completion agenda,” and serious expectations of significant change on the near horizon. Below are the shortened, pointed versions that can easily be labeled as highly interesting, thought-provoking, and provocative.

Cameron: The diversity issue is not as great today as it is going to be in the next five to ten years. If you read the demographics and studies, the year 2050 recently changed to 2042 as the estimate for when non-white Americans will make up more than half of our population. This means we need to hire more Native Americans, more Hispanics, more Asians and other non-white Americans if we are going to have role models for those students to emulate into the future. I think that is something we really need to become serious about and give strong consideration today.

Another area about the future relates to keeping up with technology. The Millennials and Gen Xers are walking around campus with something in both hands, communicating back and forth. That behooves us, and the faculty, and staff ranks to make sure that we have the appropriate communication skills and the delivery-of-instruction skills to meet their needs and the way they learn.



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— Donald Cameron

To go back to the question about grants and the foundations, in order to maintain a high quality institution we are going to have to become more active in securing grants and enhancing our endowments and our foundations to give us the money we need to work with the students and be successful.

de los Santos: Perhaps we will be seeing an increase in partnerships between community colleges and some for-profits. There may be some opportunities, particularly as we're

looking at using technology to be innovative along with the proliferation of open courseware. That's going to evolve and emerge as a game changer, because it could change the whole concept of the business model for higher education. If we see this great proliferation of sophisticated in-depth, high quality, media-rich, open courseware sanctioned by faculty and the community colleges, it will change the business model and at least change the role of faculty in the classroom as we talk about the future.

There is also going to be increasing pressure over the next five years for community college CEOs to spend more of their time raising funds and looking at alternative sources for fundraising.

I also think that over the next five years we're going to see a lot of transitions in leadership. CEOs to faculty members are going to be retiring. Those who have put in 30, 35, 40, sometimes 45 years into community colleges are going to be making transitions. I'm not saying that they're going to stop working, but they're going to transition out of their current roles.

Gould: I have to say the most pressing issues and challenges are related to declining public resources while the demand for community college education is on a steep rise.

Declining fiscal resources has challenged community colleges to continue a multiple-level mission that includes community services, lifelong learning, and community public interest programs and services. Low level basic skills, English as a Second Language, and even Citizenship class offerings are losing ground to a greater focus on college readiness, transfer, and career-technical programs.

Yet, as we look at fiscal crisis through the lens of the optimist and towards the end of five years, there is great hope for more accessible, better, standardized learning outcomes and curricula, and opportunities for collaboration between and among colleges for robust, effective online teaching and learning. The fiscal crisis might even result in collaborative regional or virtual curricular offerings; new ways of teaching; and anytime, anyplace learning offered through centralized online programs that reduce the cost of online learning infrastructure, learning management software, and course and program development. Perhaps we will even see the blending of teaching and curricular resources and programs developed by private corporations blended with the tradition of public institutionally based teaching and course development.

We should definitely see the development of social learning networks allowing for greater access to learning tools and information. Perhaps we will see the emergence of standardized courses, teaching through regional and/or state consortiums. We might even see governance become more efficient and effective. In short, the current fiscal crisis provides an opportunity to produce a better return on the public and private investment into community college education.

I think how we manage change is going to become ever more important. Bob Johansen at the recent ACE general meeting used the acronym VUCAW, which stands for a volatile, uncertain, complex, ambiguous, world. That's only going to increase, not decrease. How do you move forward in the face of that?

— Lee Lambert

Questions and Answers

Lambert: I think how we manage change is going to become ever more important. Bob Johansen at the recent ACE general meeting used the acronym VUCAW, which stands for a volatile, uncertain, complex, ambiguous, world. That's only going to increase, not decrease. How do you move forward in the face of that? And going hand in hand with that is leadership. We can't talk about change really without talking about talent management and leadership development.

Of course I think technology is already re-defining what we do, but I think it's going to become increasingly more so. If you take a look at the disruptive innovation work by Christensen and Horn, the question becomes when is the disruption going to occur? It might happen in the next five years. When will we hit that point where it flips over? Do we become like RCA and Zenith and all those companies compared to all the Sonys and the LGs and the Samsungs? I don't know, but I worry about that, and how fast can I move to make sure we're staying on the forefront of what's happening with technology. Not to say get rid of your face-to-face, but to say how do these all work together. There will always be students who want the face-to-face experience, and it's very important. But there's going to be a whole set of folks, who for whatever reasons, will not want that experience.

Lassiter: In the spirit of succinctness, Lassiter provided the following laundry list: For public community colleges funding at the state level is the #1 priority; addressing the completion agenda; advocacy for the contemporary role and mission of the community college; causing the larger community to view the community college as a key cog in the 'economic engine;' reframing the approach to developmental education; in view of declining resources and the continual growth in enrollment, is the 'open door' mission thrust still viable?; embracing the concept of a 'culture of evidence' within the college structure, including the governing board; guiding the board from an undue emphasis on the 'business side' and not enough focus on the academic and student services part of the policy-making role of the governing board; preparing for changes in funding patterns from access-oriented to outcome-oriented; and succession planning for both faculty and senior administrators.

Milliron: I have a lot of confidence in the embrace of innovation in community colleges. I think that the press has not just been toward access, but access and success and completion. I think people are going to be surprised, and I don't think it's going to be easy. This is hard work, but you're going to see a lot of community colleges really put their shoulder to the wheel and really tackle the challenges of academic catch up and remediation, tackle the challenges of leveraging technology, think through the learn-and-earn concept, and begin to look at the end-to-end model.

We use this model at the foundation called the lost momentum framework that actually asks colleges to look at every stage of a student's progression from connection, to entry, to progression, to completion - look at your lost points where you're losing students, look at your momentum strategies, and then really innovate together to develop a coherent completion-centric pathway through the entire institution.

I think the embrace of new models, with a real focus on quality learning, is going to be at the heart of this work. You're going to see more energy and activity in the next ten years, almost like a rebirth of the community college movement that was explosive in the late 60s and 70s. There's this new

You're going to see more energy and activity in the next ten years, almost like a rebirth of the community college movement that was explosive in the late 60s and 70s. There's this new challenge at our tables, and it is probably time for us to step up and figure out what these new models are going to look like. The most important thing is for us to just stay laser focused on student learning and effective outcomes for our students and make sure that we work with people of good will around a very important challenge and be tough minded about it, not apologetic.

— Mark Milliron

challenge at our tables, and it is probably time for us to step up and figure out what these new models are going to look like. The most important thing is for us to just stay laser focused on student learning and effective outcomes for our students and make sure that we work with people of good will around a very important challenge and be tough minded about it, not apologetic. Community colleges have done a lot of great work they should be proud of, and now it's time to innovate against a new challenge.

While *increasing enrollments, declining resources, retiring leaders, and political chaos are pressing issues for most community colleges, the completion agenda transcends all other current issues to focus our attention on this national imperative.*

— Terry O'Banion

O'Banion: While increasing enrollments, declining resources, retiring leaders, and political chaos are pressing issues for most community colleges, the completion agenda transcends all other current issues to focus our attention on this national imperative. Demands will be placed on community colleges by the White House and the state houses to double the number of completers in the next decade or so. The foundations will provide hundreds of millions of dollars to experiment with new programs and practices. All community colleges will embrace the agenda, some with strong commitments, some reluctantly. In five years we will begin to see some bright spots of success in maybe a hundred or so colleges who do it right. The overall outcome for the nation's 1,200 colleges will be disappointing, and we will enter a period not unlike every other period of calm that follows a storm of reform: analysis, blame, disappointment, Pollyanna explanations, resignation, and then a rising tide of energy and passion when the new bromide appears.

You *also have to throw in globalization. You've got a tsunami in Japan, and people are closing down automobile assembly plants in the United States. It just points out how totally interdependent we are on what's happening in the rest of the world. Look at what's happening in the Middle East. Not many years ago, people would say, 'oh that's too bad, but it doesn't involve us.' Well, all of it involves us now.*

— John Roueche

Roueche: We're moving so dramatically into new arenas and new ways of delivering instruction that we'll never go back to the old way completely.

We're faced with all these burgeoning enrollments, but in the face of draconian budget cuts. I would say in the short run that handling that without turning away the very students who need us the most will be our major, major challenge.

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We're going to have to do more with adjunct professors. Obviously, adjunct faculty will be the survival probably of the community college down the road, unless we become a lot more successful with our entrepreneurial outreach partnership activities.

We're probably going to have a 70 or 80 percent leadership turnover in the next five years. We're also going to have a huge turnover of faculty. So we have lots and lots of challenges facing us and no easy answers. I tell people, if you like change, if you thrive in change, this is the right field for you.

Shugart: We have seen dramatic improvements in our results with students, and it is resulting in a much higher graduation rates. Our success rates among developmental students have more than doubled from the mid 90s to now. It's extraordinary. We've worked steadily at it for 15 years. So I'm very, very hopeful – now that perhaps 200 institutions are deeply into this work – that the needle is going to be moving in a lot of places.

Questions and Answers

More people will recognize that community colleges are a dominant mode of access to higher education in America, and they'll take us seriously for that. Their expectations are going to go up even as our results improve. That may be expressed in policy and in funding, but certainly it's going to be expressed in educational measures. So I expect five years from now we will begin to see the first very serious use across the country of public disclosure of institutional performance metrics. It's important that they be the right measures, or they'll create perverse behaviors and incentives.

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— Sandy Shugart

For example, you can go to a lot of places for four-year colleges now and see published graduation rates. We are just beginning to see that occur with two-year colleges. We're getting better at that. You really need to have a graduation rate for students who come to us college ready. Then you need to have additional graduation rates for students who required light, medium, or heavy remediation, because those are very different populations. And a consumer needs to be able to decide what population am I in and who's going to best meet my needs. We need more discriminating measures that really speak to the work and the needs of the student. I think that will be emerging over the next five years.

Snyder: The overreaching issue is that the U.S. has not moved the needle in terms of college attainment. College attainment is a good measure of the future economic success of the country. That dovetails pretty clearly with the Complete College America initiative that the governors are adopting. We think that is going to be the driving force for the future. We will be looking at what we have to do to get more completers.

The complicating issue is that we have decreased funding from the states. We also have revenue issues. So I think the schools are going to have to find ways to be more efficient, because you can't increase the revenue on the backs of our students, who can't afford it. I think those are two competing forces. The country needs to grow the middle class, which I think is a laser-like focus on what we have.

Thor: Clearly the biggest problem we have is budget reductions. We are very focused on the achievement gap, and we are clearly aware of the fact that certain minority groups are not succeeding at the same rates as others. We are very supportive of that; however, we're also concerned that quality be part of the completion agenda – in other words, that we're not just about increasing numbers of certificates and degrees at any cost.

I think keeping up with technology is a tremendous challenge for community colleges. The more traditional-aged student coming in here is not only now a digital native, but they are demanding that fairly state-of-the-art technology be available to them and be used in the classroom.

The other big challenge is that we have to learn to collaborate both within institutions and across our institutions, both for efficiency and the fact that we can't all be doing everything. We need to be coordinating what we're doing so that the region is provided with the services and the programs that it needs, but not all of us are doing it. The problem that we have is basically the not-invented-here syndrome. Each institution, each department, and each faculty member thinks that they know how to do it best. They wouldn't dare hand it over to somebody else or adopt somebody else's model. I don't think we have the resources to continue behaving like that.

Western Governors University: Partnering for Community College Student Success

When 19 U.S. governors established Western Governors University in 1997 they had a vision—little more than a dream—that technology coupled with excellent academic quality would open doors of opportunity for countless individuals who might otherwise be unable to pursue their education and career goals. Today, in 2011, the vision is reality.

Like America’s community colleges, nonprofit WGU serves a diverse student body. Of WGU’s 25,000 students spread across all 50 states, most are working adults, and their ages range from the early 20s to 60s. They come to WGU because they want a great quality education at a very affordable tuition. They want flexibility, support, and knowledge and skills that will fit what the job market is demanding. And they want bachelor’s and master’s degrees that are respected by academia and industry.

But given that online education is so widespread today, what makes WGU different?

“Students choose WGU for a host of special reasons, including WGU’s low tuition and flexibility,” notes Patrick Partridge, Vice President of Enrollment at WGU, “but most also value WGU’s unique competency-based academic model that allows students to demonstrate their knowledge and abilities through rigorous assessments on an individualized pace not tied to traditional semesters.”

The WGU approach is particularly well-suited to the community college graduate or student who has completed substantial college already—even more so if the student has additional experience or competence in their degree area.

WGU does not compete for transfer students who want to attend state four-year institutions. Rather, Partridge notes, “WGU is a transfer option for community college students whose life situations—such as work, family, and income—puts the traditional campus education out of reach. Often that’s an older student, but the same situation applies to many younger students too.”

WGU also assigns a mentor for each new student whose primary job is to provide ongoing personal support, including weekly calls at first. “Our mentors are basically ‘success coaches,’” says Chris Mallett, Associate Provost for Mentoring. “Their job is to be part personal coach and part academic advisor.” The one-on-one mentoring model is also applied to support students in each online course.

As for the low tuition mentioned earlier, for most WGU programs tuition is less than \$6,000 a year. Many students take advantage of WGU’s flat-rate tuition of \$2,890, which covers ALL the courses that a student can complete in six months, to accelerate the time to complete a degree. Sometimes the saving in time and money can be dramatic.

Noted Harvard Business School guru Clay Christiansen considers WGU one of the leading “disruptive innovators” in higher education. The praise is appreciated, Partridge says, “but we want everyone to understand that our innovations are always student focused.”

Western Governors University has developed marketing partnerships and articulation agreements with community colleges all across the U.S. to provide a meaningful option for students whose needs might otherwise go unmet. To learn more, visit the WGU website at www.wgu.edu/partners.



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The SOURCE is the early fruition of a project that initially started in late 2009. Its aim is to provide timely, accurate and highly informative resources to community college students, faculty, staff and administrators. SOURCE reports are based on the latest scholarly literature and through interviews with individuals who have been identified as reliable and intelligent sources of information about the issues, trends, and strategies concerning the growth and development of community colleges on numerous levels. SOURCE reports are designed to be graphically pleasing and highly readable, with clear typefaces and images. In addition, SOURCE reports include numerous live links (highlighted in light blue), giving readers the ability to easily and quickly go right to the SOURCE of information cited in these documents. The SOURCE website includes a variety of special sections, segmented into SILOS, where visitors can link to numerous other reports, news and other information resources concerning community colleges.

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