



A National Community College Agenda for Social Justice

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NPACC 2020 Survey Report

By Bryan Reece, Ph.D.

Version 9/9/2020

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ABOUT NPACC

The primary goal of NPACC (National Policy Agenda for Community Colleges) is to address social justice and equity issues at the national level through the work of American community colleges. Our scope of work for 2020 includes a comprehensive literature review on national policy recommendations, a national survey of community college personnel, and the development of a literature-based, data-informed national agenda for community colleges. This report marks the publication of our agenda. This work will be used in an effort to expand federal support of the community college sector while highlighting the vital role community colleges play in advancing social justice and equity for our students. A more thorough discussion of the agenda will appear in a forthcoming book from Routledge in late 2020 or early 2021.

NPACC is supported by a grassroots group of nearly 60 volunteers, including trustees, college presidents, administrators, faculty, staff, community college alumni, community members, and elected officials. We believe racism and discrimination in America must be addressed through a national strategy that recognizes and supports the leadership role community colleges play in working with students from historically underserved communities. You can find more information at www.NPACC.org.

Volunteers who helped make this survey happen include the following:

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A NATIONAL COMMUNITY COLLEGE AGENDA FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE

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Bryan Reece, Ph.D.

The idea of America has captured imagination from its inception. Engineering a country around equality and opportunity for all remains appealing the world over. Part of our struggle to move toward this ideal requires direct confrontation of social structures that work in opposition to equality. Discrimination is one of those structures. Discrimination is part of the American fabric holding threads that are over 400 years old, and with many of these threads still loaded in the loom today, we have considerable work to do. Removing inequities from American society is essential to building a better union and is the central goal of social justice.

Every social science discipline in American higher education is working in this space, documenting individual and institutional bias against people from marginalized communities. People of color, recent immigrants, low-income families, other-abled individuals, the LGBTQ+ community, indigenous Americans, and more have long histories of suffering discrimination, and with little more than a click, we can watch current incidents of this suffering play out in our daily news feeds. A majority of Americans (58%) believe race relations in the U.S. are bad, and most (56%) believe this problem is getting worse (Horowitz, Brown, & Cox, 2019). A clear majority of Americans indicate they do not want racism to be part of our society (Horowitz, Brown, & Cox, 2019), and a recent survey found that 75% of Americans believe diversity strengthens us and should be something we nurture in society (Horowitz J. M., 2019).

Most of America is calling for social justice. I know there are people who do not care for this idea. Their expressions range from dispassionate academic disagreement to blind hate. Although some resistance to efforts for social justice was found in our own survey results and is consistently present in national polling, we are at a turning point in America where large majorities recognize racism and discrimination, see it as a problem, and want to do something tangible to eliminate it.

There are three basic ways the public sector can address discrimination in the U.S. First, we can do the steady and tedious work of research. This is something that our universities and a few nonprofits have done well. Documenting the histories of each group and describing the social constructs that support biased decision-making is important work. It helps us understand the problem and develop meaningful solutions. The weakness with this approach, however, is that it relies on people in power to institute change when they see the evidence of this discrimination in their own institutions. However, people in power rarely volunteer to make changes to benefit people out of power, regardless of evidence. And if the change requires that these leaders surrender, or lessen their power, the likelihood of change is extremely low. In this sense, research may be better understood as a necessary prelude to meaningful action.

The second way discrimination can be addressed by the public sector is through the law. Making discrimination illegal is an approach that has achieved significant gains. Through local, state and federal legislation, we have eaten away at hate-based practices. Through court proceedings and subsequent

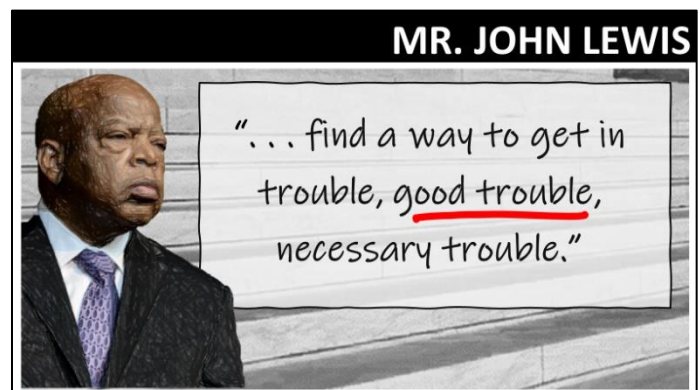
precedents, we have removed important structures and practices that lead to unjust discrimination. A major strategy used by social justice organizers has been to leverage the findings in research, bring these findings to the greater public's attention through carefully planned demonstrations, and use the resulting swell of public opinion to end unjust practices by replacing them with new laws, policies, and precedents. Like the first method discussed in the prior paragraph, this approach directs our civic leaders—people in power—to make changes to their institutions, but it comes at them with greater force than reasoning and research alone. This approach brings the influence of government authority.

The third way to address discrimination against marginalized groups is to help individuals from these communities occupy positions of power at levels proportionate to their populations. I believe this is the most effective way to eventually rid our country of discrimination. The most common pathway to positions of influence and power, the most common route to a position at or near the top of our civic and private institutions, goes through higher education. It is rare to become a leader in legislatures, corporations and nonprofits without a bachelor's degree. It is basically impossible to lead law firms, hospitals, educational institutions, court rooms, medical practices, and engineering firms without formal education. To place individuals from marginalized communities into positions of power in the U.S., we must move students from these communities successfully through our institutions of higher education.

Of the sectors in higher education, community colleges are most focused on working with students from disfavored communities. In 2016-17, 8.7 million students enrolled in community colleges throughout the U.S. Of all the 2016-17 undergraduates attending higher education institutions, 38 percent were community college students, with a little over two-thirds of them enrolled part-time and a little under one-third enrolled fulltime. Community college enrollments skew toward students from historically underserved communities. While 38 percent of undergraduates are enrolled in community colleges, 55 percent of poor undergraduates (dependent students with family incomes below \$30,000) attend community college, 49 percent of African American students and 51 percent of Hispanic students start at a two-year public college while only 38 percent of Asian students and 36 percent of White students start at a community college (Community College Research Center, 2020). In the most general sense, community colleges work with more students from disfavored communities than the 4-year public institutions, 4-year private nonprofit institutions, and 4-year for-profit institutions. Although students from disfavored communities are not exclusively who we work with in community colleges, they encompass the majority of our students.

This puts community colleges at the center of social justice work. In the U.S., we have long-standing social and cultural structures that perpetuate inequality along lines of race, ethnicity, income, and more. A central role of American community colleges is to disrupt these structures on behalf of the students we serve. In this sense, community colleges are

called to play a subversive role in contemporary society, but it is a good kind of subversion. It is the kind of subversion that the late Congressman and civil rights leader John Lewis called making “good



trouble.” Community colleges serve the majority of undergraduates from historically underserved communities, and the intended impact of our work with these students is to literally empower them, enrich them, and vest them by placing them in positions of social, political, and economic influence. To be successful in this work, we need to break old discriminatory structures, and this kind of work has historically been characterized by the people who benefit from these traditional structures as “causing trouble.” So, if you work in the community college sector, it is important for you to recognize and embrace the idea that you are in the business of making *good trouble*.

For America to move forward with social justice work—and most Americans want to move forward in this direction—community colleges must be strong. This is a premise I have held for many years and in 2019 decided to give greater structure to the idea by exploring a series of questions:

- What do we need to do to stimulate greater academic success for students from historically underserved communities?
- What role does community college education play in this process?
- Who are the underserved communities in the U.S.?
- How is each community currently performing in higher education?
- How much improvement do we need see if we hope to approach equity?
- Where are community colleges already strong and where do they need strengthening?
- What do we need to do to strengthen the American community college?

Exploring these questions, I spent a lot of time analyzing several projects and programs I had been involved with over my career that attempted to increase rates of student success. I read a wide selection of literature in this field and collected data related to these questions. Throughout this process, I was focused on developing a set of strategies we can implement inside our colleges—a set of strategies that the leadership team on community college campuses could adopt internally and locally.

However, as my analysis proceeded, it became clear that there are many solutions that need to be put in place that are beyond the capacity of single institutions. For example, the need for data sharing between the government and community colleges is discussed throughout the literature and a basic need I encountered in my own experience. However, community colleges do not have complete control over the development of these data-sharing agreements, and a single community college will find it difficult to develop data sharing agreements with large national agencies. As my research proceeded throughout 2019-20, several challenges like this emerged, and it became clear that strengthening community colleges requires internal AND external reform.

At the local and state level, community colleges collaborate well with government and civic sectors. Most community colleges are organized at the county level with locally elected or government appointed trustees/board members from the community. This makes for solid professional (and personal) relationships between community colleges, unified school districts, local municipalities, county agencies, and other civic organizations. With education policy and funding heavily influenced by the states, community colleges typically have strong relationships with their state government. Most of the states have a community college state system office, and college leaders are often active in their state capitols. In contrast, community colleges do not generally have such strong ties to the federal government. We have a few national organizations like the Association of Community College Trustees

(ACCT) and the American Association of Community Colleges (AACC) that express our national interests, but our level of involvement in Washington is thin compared to that of our 4-year and K12 colleagues. As “community” colleges, we are strong in our back yards. But we are clearly not as strong in Washington D.C. As a result, federal legislators and agency personnel hold high levels of consciousness for the issues impacting 4-year and K12 institutions, with community college challenges often an afterthought.

The absence of a strong federal agenda for community colleges is deeply concerning when we recognize the community college sector as an engine for social justice and consider the students we serve. The health of our community college systems should be a major component of the federal government’s strategy for education specifically and should be part of all strategies to promote upward mobility in America.

To get a sense of what a comprehensive federal agenda for community colleges might look like, I first assessed the policy recommendations published by ACCT and AACC. Both organizations have adopted federal policy recommendations and have collaborated in the development of these recommendations. They have been very active in national agendas supporting community college completion rates and equity, supporting significant research and training in these areas. Their emphasis on completion and equity has been promoted as a national agenda for community colleges, with much of the work in these areas directed at community college leaders and some of the work directed at federal actors.

The policy recommendations ACCT and AACC have concentrated on for 2020 place an emphasis on five core areas. First, they recommend greater support for low-income students through reauthorization of the Higher Education Act, modifications to Pell funding, support for college promise programs, assistance with food insecurities, and tax code revisions to benefit low income families. Second, they recommend strengthening of workforce development education with expanded funding for students and programs, placing emphasis on colleges who serve students from marginalized communities. Third, they recommend the development of several accountability/student-success measures. Some of these include development of a shared national database for outcomes, revisions to success measurements, and revisions to financial regulations related to risk assessment. Fourth, they ask for a reduction in the regulatory environment that burdens many community colleges. Fifth, they recommend support for several historically underserved student groups. Some of these include Dreamers, military veterans, formerly incarcerated people, low income earners, and international students.

ACCT and AACC have developed strong recommendations; however, my initial feeling after reviewing both associations’ proposals was that the list was incomplete. So, I decided to go back through the literature, review all my notes, and develop a list of all the strategic recommendations that help marginalized students experience greater academic success. Once I had gone through the list, I looked at each strategic recommendation with an eye to federal assistance. Where might the federal government be able to assist with the implementation of these recommended strategies? This process led to six possible areas of assistance from the federal government. Some of the recommendations under the six areas replicate those supported by AACC/ACCT and none of them conflict with the two organizations’ recommendations. The six recommended policy areas and corresponding details are literature-based suggestions that should be considered in a comprehensive national agenda for community colleges.

The federal government can strengthen community colleges by **expanding federal aid** to students. This may include policies that help keep community colleges affordable (e.g., college promise programs), expand financial aid funding (e.g., Pell Grant), fund housing solutions for housing-insecure students, and fund food solutions for food-insecure students.

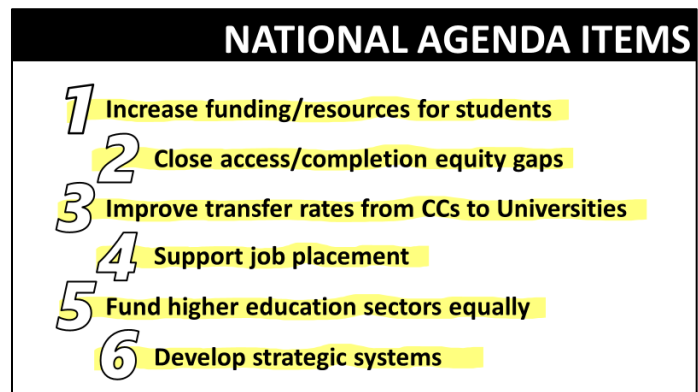
The federal government can strengthen community colleges by **promoting equity**. This may include policies that increase funding for support services to students from historically underserved communities; support national best practices that encourage equity-mindedness; allow DACA/Dreamer students to pay the same in-state tuition rates as other state residents; recognize the community college segment as essential/central to national social justice efforts; support diversity in hiring at community colleges; develop a national score card on equity for all community colleges; and require faculty, staff, and administrators to receive training in equity-mindedness in pedagogy, service, and management.

The federal government can also strengthen community colleges by **helping improve transfer**. This may include policies that support common course numbering for GE related courses in community colleges and 4-year

institutions (e.g., History 101 is the same throughout the state), support the recognition of all AA/AS degrees as transferring in to 4-year institutions at the junior (third year) level, sponsor a national scholars program to encourage low-income/high-GPA students to transfer to highly selective universities, encourage the university ranking systems (e.g., *U.S. News and World Report*) to place greater emphasis on social mobility in their overall score, support diversity-balanced admissions at 4-year institutions, end legacy scoring for admissions in universities, and support one integrated educational system (K–16) to align curriculum and make transitions more seamless

In addition, the federal government can strengthen community colleges by **supporting job placement** of CTE students. This may include processes that map CTE programs to jobs on a national scale, expand federal funding (e.g., Perkins) for development of CTE programs, support government data sharing with community colleges for job placement tracking and CTE program recruitment, and develop a national apprenticeship program/network.

Further, the federal government can strengthen community colleges by **equalizing higher education funding**. This may include policies that conduct and maintain a comprehensive report on higher education funding across all higher education segments (How much government money is invested in CC, state college, public university, private university students?), call for equal investment in all students (Community college students should receive comparable funding to 4-year students), balance federal spending between research and teaching/learning, encourage social justice related nonprofits to invest as much in community colleges as they do in 4-year institutions, support increased funding for counseling services in community colleges, and support an increase in the proportion of fulltime faculty at community colleges.

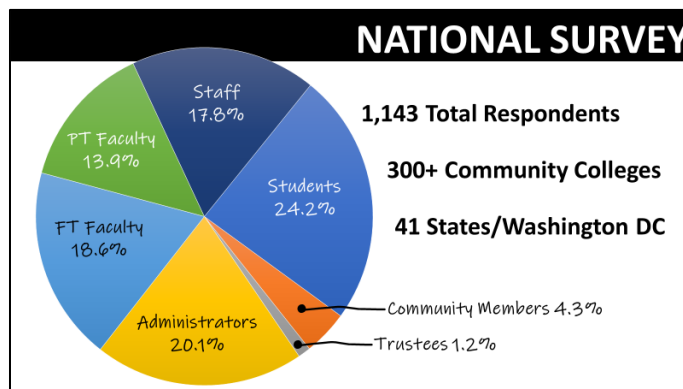


Finally, the federal government can strengthen community colleges by **supporting systems development**. This may include policies that support development of a national data mart measuring major outcomes, support development of models for multi-year scheduling, support development of a means for student progress tracking, support development of a volunteer network to support students, support data sharing between high schools and community colleges for seamless enrollment, support a means to articulate military training into college credit, and support a way to grant credit for prior learning for working adults.

These areas constitute a broadened scope of work for federal government to play in building agency across the community college sector. To further assess the validity of these recommendations and develop prioritizations for the necessary work, we asked community college personnel and students to weigh in on these recommendations through a national survey. The survey was constructed around the six policy areas described above (survey can be viewed at <https://forms.gle/iSNzhaaQrCgYpiKf7>). With the help of almost 60 volunteers (trustees, college presidents, administrators, faculty, staff, community college alumni, community members, and elected officials), the survey was administered throughout June, July and August of 2020.

Distribution of the survey was carried out through several phases. We asked state system leaders to support the survey and distribute it to the community college leaders in their state. We contacted District CEOs and asked them to distribute the survey to college/campus leaders throughout their districts. We reached out directly to over 1,100 college CEOs/presidents and encouraged them to distribute the survey to college personnel and students. We reached out directly to individual community college personnel. Finally, we posted the survey broadly across several social media feeds.

Over 1,100 respondents contributed their opinions through the survey, with 17.8 percent of the respondents representing staff personnel, 24.2 percent students, 4.3 percent community members, 1.2 percent trustees, 20.1 percent administrators, 18.6 percent full-time faculty, and 13.9 percent part-time faculty. College personnel were distributed across 41 states and Washington D.C. Over 300 community colleges and related organizations contributed to the data. Respondents represented major race/ethnicity groups in the U.S. with 1.7 percent identifying as American Indian/Native American/Alaska Native, 43.4 percent identifying as Asian, 4.0 percent identifying as Black/African- American, 10.7 percent identifying as Latinx/Hispanic, 0.6 percent identifying as Native Hawaiian/other Pacific Islander, 35.5 percent identifying as White/Caucasian (Non-Hispanic), and 4.0 percent identifying as mixed race.



FINDINGS FROM POLICY AREA 1

Increase Funding/Resources for Community College Students

According to a recent report released by the Century Foundation (2019), private 4-year institutions throughout the U.S. spend an average of \$72,000 per fulltime equivalent (FTE) student, public 4-year

institutions spend an average of \$40,000 per FTE student, and community colleges nation-wide spend an average of \$14,000 per FTE student. It is true that many of the private and public 4-year institutions have research as part of their mission while community colleges do not. This naturally means 4-year institutions cost more to run. But even when spending calculations are controlled for research, private 4-year institutions spend three times more than community colleges and public 4-year institutions spend 60% more than community colleges. Given that community colleges serve a much higher proportion of students from historically underserved communities, this disparity of public funding

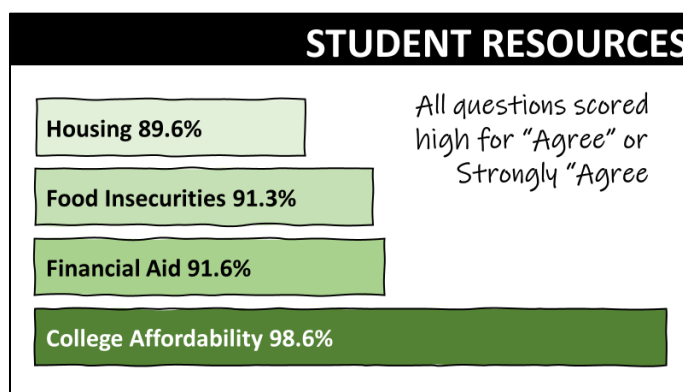
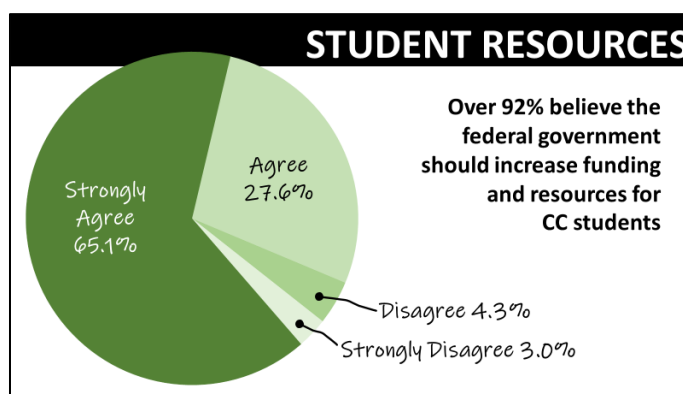
(and private funding) is inequitable. To assess the extent to which the federal government should increase funding and resources for community college students, we asked community college personnel to weigh in on four possible ways the federal government could provide help: 1) support keeping community colleges affordable, 2) increase financial aid funding for students, 3) support/fund solutions for housing-insecure students, and 4) support/fund solutions for food-insecure students. Averaging the scores across all four suggestions, we found the following: over 92 percent of respondents indicated that the federal government should play a role in increasing funding/resources for community college students. Of these, 65.1 percent indicated that they *strongly agree* with this position, 27.6 indicated that they *agree*, 4.3 percent indicated that they *disagree*, and 3.0 percent indicated that they *strongly disagree*.

Of the four suggestions, the one addressing college affordability received the most support with 98.6 percent of respondents indicating that they *agree* or *strongly agree* that the federal government should play a role in keeping community college affordable. The suggestion at the second highest level of support, with 91.6 percent of respondents saying they *agree* or *strongly agree*, asks that the federal government increase financial aid for students. Regarding food insecurities, 91.3 percent of respondents believed the federal government should do something to help. The suggestion with the least amount of support, but strong support nonetheless, was the one involving housing insecurities, with 89.6 percent of respondents indicating the federal government should do something to help students with housing problems.

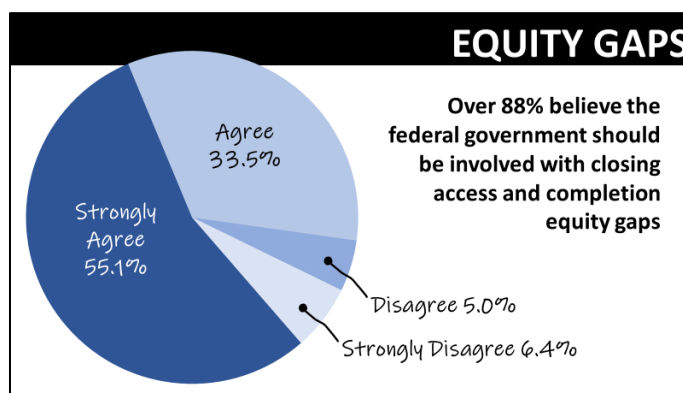
FINDINGS FROM POLICY AREA 2

Close Access and Completion Equity Gaps

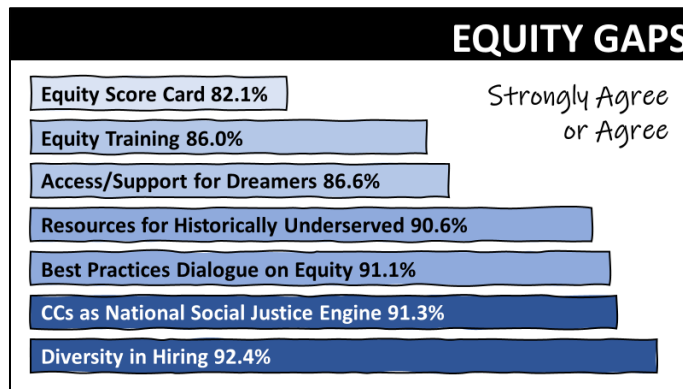
Students from marginalized communities are underrepresented in higher education. Many are underrepresented with regard to admissions/enrollments, especially at our country's most selective universities. All marginalized communities are underrepresented at commencement ceremonies, with



disproportionately low percentages receiving bachelor's degrees. To assess federal government involvement in helping close access and equity gaps, we asked community college personnel to weigh in on seven possible ways the federal government could provide help: 1) Increase support for students from historically underserved communities; 2) Support a national best practices dialogue around equity-mindedness in pedagogy, service, and management; 3) Allow DACA/Dreamer students to receive the same educational services as U.S. citizens; 4) Recognize community colleges as essential to national social justice efforts; 5) Support diversity in hiring at Community Colleges; 6) Develop a national score card on equity for all Community Colleges; and 7) Require community college employees to complete equity-mindedness training. Averaging the scores across all seven questions, we found that over 88 percent of respondents indicated that the federal government should play a role in closing access and completion equity gaps. Of these, 55.1 percent indicated that they *strongly agree* with this kind of support from federal policy, 33.5 percent indicated they *agree*, 5.0 percent indicated that they *disagree*, and 6.4 percent indicated that they *strongly disagree*.



All seven suggestions individually received very strong support from community college personnel. The suggestion that received the strongest support calls for federal support to increase diversity in hiring. More than 92 percent of respondents indicated that they *agree* or *strongly agree* with federal support in this area. The weakest level of support was found for the need for a national equity score card, although support for the score card still registered high, with 82.1 percent supporting federal assistance in this area. Having all community college personnel participate in some kind of federal equity training was supported by 86.0 percent of respondents. Providing Dreamers and DACA students with the same benefits as U.S. citizens was supported by 86.6 percent, and federal support for students from historically underserved communities was endorsed by 90.6 percent. Some kind of federally sponsored/supported dialogue about education and equity was supported by 91.1 percent of respondents. Finally, having the federal government recognize community colleges as instrumental in national efforts to promote social justice was supported by 91.3 percent of survey respondents.

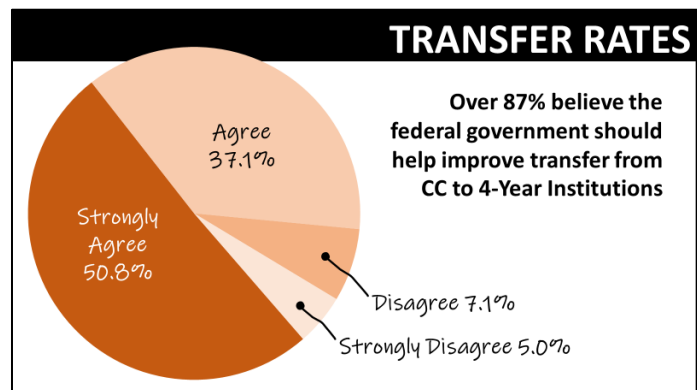


FINDINGS FROM POLICY AREA 3

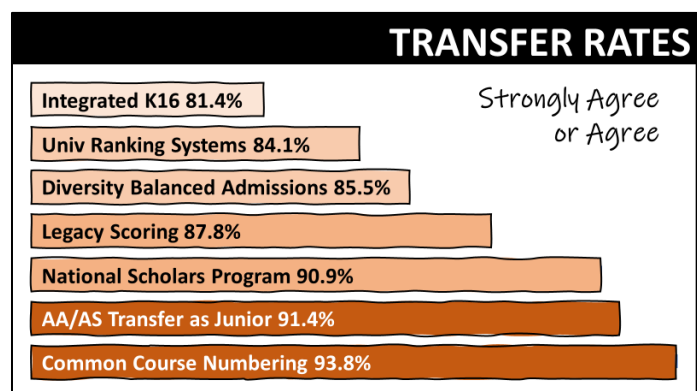
Improve Transfer Rates from Community Colleges to 4-Year Institutions

About 80 percent of community college students indicate they intend to transfer from their community college to a 4-year institution and pursue a bachelor's degree. About 30 percent of these students successfully transfer within six years (Community College Research Center, 2020). To assess potential

government involvement in helping improve transfer rates, we asked community college personnel to weigh in on seven possible ways the federal government could provide help: 1) Support common course numbering for GE courses in community colleges and 4-year institutions (e.g., History 101 would be the same throughout the state); 2) Make sure all public 4-year institutions receive students with AA/AS degrees at junior level (3rd year) status; 3) Sponsor a national scholars program to encourage low-income/high-GPA students to transfer to highly selective universities; 4) Encourage the university ranking systems (e.g., U.S. News and World Report) to place greater emphasis on social mobility; 5) Support diversity-balanced admissions at 4-year institutions; 6) End legacy scoring for admissions in universities (Legacy scoring gives preferential admissions to applicants whose relatives attended the university); and 7) Support one integrated educational system (K–16) to align curriculum and make transitions more seamless. Averaging the scores across all seven questions, we found that over 87 percent of respondents indicated that the federal government should play a role in helping improve transfer rates, with 50.8 percent indicating they *strongly agree* with this kind of support from federal policy, 37.1 indicating they *agree*, 7.1 percent indicating they *disagree*, and 5.0 percent indicating they *strongly disagree*.



All seven suggestions individually received very strong support from community college personnel. The question that received the strongest support calls for federal help with developing a common course numbering systems for GE related courses across 2-year and 4-year institutions at least at the state level. While some states have already completed this work, most have not. Just under 94 percent of respondents indicated they *agree* or *strongly agree* with federal support for this suggestion. The weakest level of support was found for the need for an integrated K-16 curriculum and transition process, although support for this integration still registered high, with 81.4 percent supporting federal assistance in this area at the *agree* or *strongly agree* level. Encouraging university ranking systems like *U.S. News and World Report* to place greater emphasis on the work universities are doing to promote social mobility was supported by 84.1 percent of respondents. Helping expand diversity consideration in 4-year admissions practices was supported by 85.5 percent, and removing legacy scoring from all admissions practices was supported by 87.8 percent of respondents. Development of a national scholars program with particular emphasis on helping low-income/high-GPA students transfer from community colleges to selective universities was supported by 90.9 percent. Finally, making sure all AA/AS transfer degrees are recognized by 4-year universities at the junior level, or third year, was supported by 91.4 percent of survey respondents.

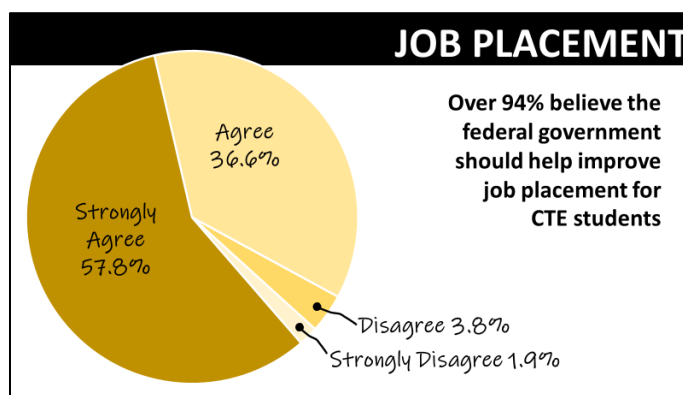


Common course numbering is often controversial with faculty because it touches on curriculum and academic traditions that recognize faculty as the primary architects of college curriculum. The controversy that is often raised involves faculties' academic freedom to develop curriculum. Common course numbering typically removes a degree of flexibility for faculty by aligning curriculum across community colleges and 4-year institutions most often at the state level. This practice puts some restraint on faculty; however, community college students receive great benefit from this approach because it makes the transfer process and academic preparation for transfer considerably less confusing. Based on our survey findings, community college faculty recognize this benefit for students and strongly support the federal government's assistance in establishing common course number of some sort. Isolating faculty survey responses on this question, we found that 92.4 percent indicated they *strongly agree* or *strongly agree* with the need for federal government to help develop common course numbering. Sixty percent indicated they *strongly agree*, 32.4 percent said they *agree*, 5.2 percent said they *disagree*, and 2.3 percent said they *strongly disagree*.

FINDINGS FROM POLICY AREA 4

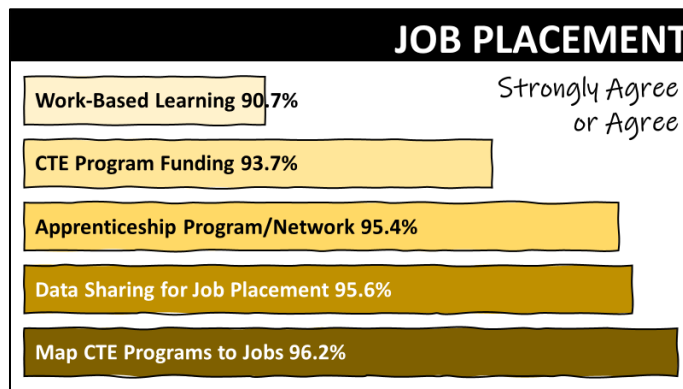
Support Job Placement for Career and Technical Education (CTE) Students

American business leaders and legislators have voiced concern over the skills gap, a phenomenon in the economy today where the number of available workers with requisite skills is not sufficient to fill jobs in the U.S. This skilled worker shortfall has placed growing scrutiny on the long tradition of career technical education in American community colleges. With as many as 20 percent of community college students working on degrees or certificates that lead directly to jobs (Community College Research Center, 2020), the successful transition from community college to the workplace is critical for student success and the strengthening of our economy. To assess potential government involvement with placing CTE student into jobs, we asked community college personnel to weigh in on five possible ways the federal government could provide help: 1) Provide national mapping of career technical (CTE) programs to jobs; 2) Expand federal funding for development of CTE programs; 3) Support government data sharing with community colleges for job placement tracking and CTE program recruitment; 4) Develop a national apprenticeship program/network; and 5) Develop national standards for work-based learning and community college education. Averaging the scores across all five questions, we found that over 94 percent of respondents indicated that the federal government should play a role in helping improve job placement for CTE students, with 57.8 percent indicating they *strongly agree* with this kind of support from federal policy, 36.6 indicating they *agree*, 3.8 percent indicating they *disagree*, and 1.9 percent indicating they *strongly disagree*.



All five questions individually registered strong responses, with some of them receiving the scores among the highest in the overall survey. The suggestion that received the strongest support in this subset recommends federal help with mapping CTE programs in community colleges to jobs. Over ninety-six percent of respondents indicated they *agree* or *strongly agree* with federal support for this capacity. The lowest level of support was found for the need for developing national work-based learning standards, with 90.7 percent supporting federal assistance in this area at the *agree* or *strongly agree* level. Expanding federal funding for CTE programs (e.g., Perkins) was supported by 93.7 percent of respondents. Bringing the federal government into the development of a national

apprenticeship programs or network of some sort was supported by 95.4 percent, and making federal data available to community colleges through a data sharing agreement to help with tracking and recruiting received 95.6% favorability from respondents.



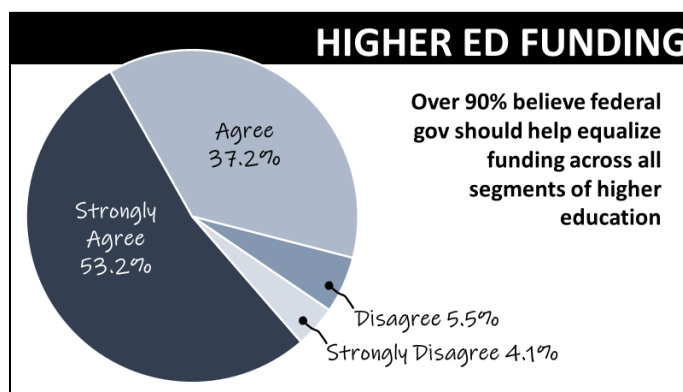
FINDINGS FROM POLICY AREA 5

Fund Higher Education Sectors Equally

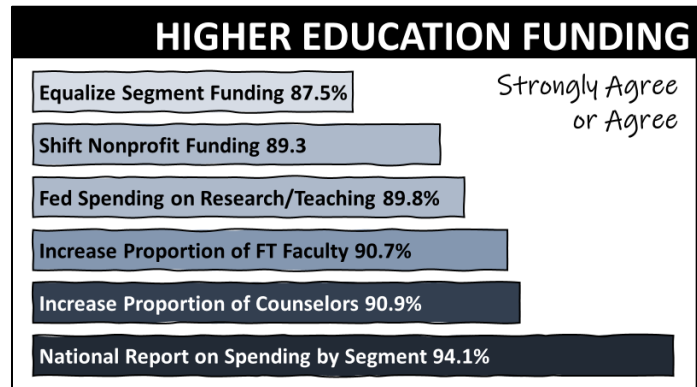
Funding for higher education from government, non-profit, and private sources is wildly unequal, with community colleges receiving the least of any higher education sector. Given that community colleges serve the majority of students from marginalized communities, this inequity is problematic on multiple levels. To assess the federal government's role in establishing equal funding across higher education sectors, which translates to equal investment in all student groups, we asked community college

personnel to weigh in on six possible ways the federal government could provide help: 1) Develop a report on funding across all higher education segments (How much money is invested in community college, state college, public university, and private university students?); 2) Call for equal investment in all undergraduate students (Community colleges students should receive comparable funding to 4-year students.); 3) Increase balance between federal spending on research and

teaching/learning; 4) Encourage social justice related nonprofits to invest as much in community colleges as they do in 4-year institutions; 5) Support expansion of funding for counseling services in community colleges; and 6) Support an increase in the proportion of full-time faculty in community colleges. Averaging the scores across all six questions, we found that over 90 percent of respondents indicated that the federal government should help equalize funding across all segments of higher education, with 53.2 percent indicating they *strongly agree* with this kind of support from federal policy, 37.2 percent indicating they *agree*, 5.5 percent indicating they *disagree*, and 4.1 percent indicating they *strongly disagree*.



All six suggestions in this subset elicited mostly favorable responses from survey respondents. The suggestion that received the strongest support in this subset recommends that the federal government develop a national report on higher education by segment. Over 94 percent of respondents indicated they *agree* or *strongly agree* with federal support in this area. The lowest level of support was found for the idea of funding all undergraduates equally across higher education segments. For this suggestion, 87.5 percent of respondents marked this *agree* or *strongly agree*. Redirecting more nonprofit funding toward community colleges received 89.3 percent support. Establishing greater balance between federal spending on research and federal spending on teaching/learning was supported by 89.8 percent of respondents. Increasing the proportion of fulltime faculty and the proportion of counselors was supported by 90.7 percent and 90.9 percent respectively.



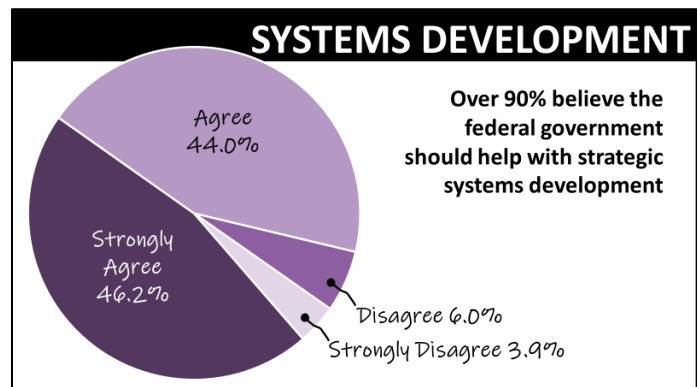
FINDINGS FROM POLICY AREA 6

Develop Strategic Systems

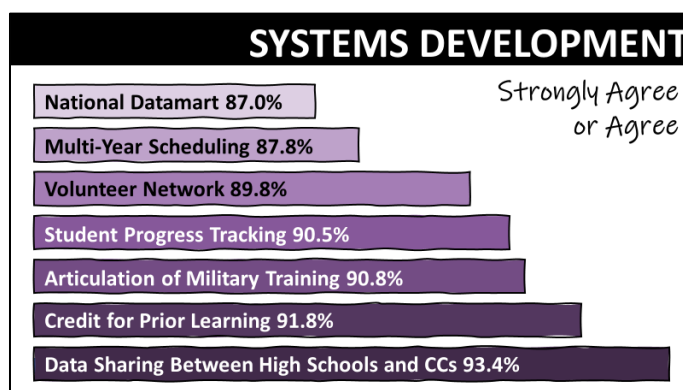
Community colleges are increasingly faced with the need for sophisticated operational systems to support strategies that close enduring academic equity gaps; however, many of the systems needed are available only to institutions with much larger budgets or the systems have not been developed at all because community colleges as a segment do not offer enough financial benefit to private companies that have the capacity to develop the solutions. To assess the federal government's

possible role in helping develop these systems, we asked community college personnel to weigh in on seven possible solutions: 1) National data mart measuring major outcomes (e.g., enrollment, course completion, graduation, transfer) for all community colleges; 2) Multi-year scheduling tool allowing students to map out their entire academic plan; 3) Student progress tracking instrument allowing college personnel and students to monitor real-time progress toward degree completion; 4) National volunteer network to add academic capital into students' lives; 5) Data-sharing

between high schools and community colleges for seamless enrollment/transition; 6) Tool for scaled articulation of military training, recognizing veterans' prior learning for college credit; and 7) Credit for prior learning tool granting credit for skills learned during employment. Averaging the scores across all seven questions, we found that over 90 percent of respondents indicated that the federal government should play a role in helping develop strategic system, with 46.2 percent indicating they *strongly agree* with this kind of support from federal policy, 44.0 percent indicating they *agree*, 6.0 percent indicating they *disagree*, and 3.9 percent indicating they *strongly disagree*.



All seven questions in this subset elicited mostly favorable responses from survey respondents. While responses were strong, this subset was the only subset to average less than 50% in *strongly agree* responses. The question that received the strongest support in this subset recommends that the federal government assist with data sharing between high schools and community colleges to make the transition more seamless. Over 93 percent of respondents indicated they *agree* or *strongly agree* with federal support in this capacity. The lowest level of support for a national data mart to measure community college outcomes, with 87.0 percent of respondents saying they *agree* or *strongly agree* with this suggestion. The federal government being involved with a multi-year scheduling solution received 87.8 percent support. Developing a national volunteer network to add academic capital into students' lives received 89.8 percent support from respondents. Federal participation in tracking student progress along their academic journey was favored by 90.5 percent. Development of a national recognition of military credit was supported by 90.8 percent of respondents. Finally, granting credit for prior learning in the workplace was supported by 91.8 percent of respondents.



SUMMARY FINDINGS

The review of literature suggested that the federal government should consider providing six areas of assistance to community colleges. The six were evaluated with several policy questions under each area. Aggregated scores for each show strong support for all six. The area with strongest support was related to job placement. Over 90 percent agreed or strongly agreed that the government should assist in this area. Expanding resources/aid for students was the second most supported, with 92.8 percent. Funding higher education sectors equally received support at 90.4%. Federal assistance with the development of strategic systems garnered 90.2 percent. Bringing the federal government into efforts to close access and completion equity gaps was supported by 88.6 percent. Improving transfer from community colleges to 4-year institutions was supported by 87.8 percent.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Agree + Strongly Agree
Job Placement	1.9%	3.8%	36.6%	57.8%	94.3%
Funding/Resources for Students	3.0%	4.3%	27.6%	65.1%	92.8%
Equal Funding for Ed Sectors	4.1%	5.5%	37.2%	53.2%	90.4%
Strategic Systems Development	3.9%	6.0%	44.0%	46.2%	90.2%
Access/Completion Equity Gaps	6.4%	5.0%	33.5%	55.1%	88.6%
Improve Transfer Rates	5.0%	7.1%	37.1%	50.8%	87.8%

In all, the review of literature suggested federal policy support for 36 policies in six different policy areas. All 36 policy areas received strong support from community college personnel in the NPACC survey, with every policy recommendation attaining more than 80 percent *agree* or *strongly agree* from survey respondents. Twenty-two of the 36 policy recommendations received 90 percent or higher from respondents. These results point to a very strong convergence between research-based

recommendations for federal support of community colleges and opinion from practitioners in America's community colleges.

Policy	Policy Area	Agree + Strongly Agree
Support keeping community colleges affordable	Funding/Resources for Students	98.6%
Provide national mapping of career technical (CTE) programs to jobs	Job Placement	96.2%
Support government data sharing with CCs for job placement tracking and CTE program recruitment	Job Placement	95.6%
Develop a national apprenticeship program/network	Job Placement	95.4%
Develop a report on funding across all higher education segments (How much money is invested in each sector?)	Equal Funding for Ed Sectors	94.1%
Support common course numbering for GE courses in CCs and 4-year institutions	Improve Transfer Rates	93.8%
Expand federal funding for development of CTE programs	Job Placement	93.7%
Support a solution for data-sharing between high schools and CCs for seamless enrollment	Strategic Systems Development	93.4%
Support diversity in hiring at CCs	Access/Completion Equity Gaps	92.4%
Support a solution to grant credit for prior learning for working adults	Strategic Systems Development	91.8%
Increase financial aid funding for students	Funding/Resources for Students	91.6%
Make sure all public 4-year institutions receive students with AA/AS degrees at junior level (3rd year) status	Improve Transfer Rates	91.4%
Support/fund solutions for food-insecure students	Funding/Resources for Students	91.3%
Recognize CCs as essential to national social justice efforts	Access/Completion Equity Gaps	91.3%
Support a national best practices dialogue around equity-mindedness in pedagogy, service, and management	Access/Completion Equity Gaps	91.1%
Sponsor a national scholars program to encourage low-income/high-GPA students to transfer to highly selective universities	Improve Transfer Rates	90.9%
Support expansion of funding for counseling services in CCs	Equal Funding for Ed Sectors	90.9%
Support a solution to articulate military training into college credit	Strategic Systems Development	90.8%
Develop national standards for work-based learning and CC education	Job Placement	90.7%
Support increase of full-time faculty in CCs	Equal Funding for Ed Sectors	90.7%
Increase support for students from historically underserved communities	Access/Completion Equity Gaps	90.6%
Support development of a solution for student progress tracking	Strategic Systems Development	90.5%
Increase balance between federal spending on research and teaching/learning	Equal Funding for Ed Sectors	89.8%
Support development of a volunteer network to support students	Strategic Systems Development	89.8%
Support/fund solutions for housing-insecure students	Funding/Resources for Students	89.6%
Encourage social justice related nonprofits to invest as much in CCs as they do in 4-year institutions	Equal Funding for Ed Sectors	89.3%
End legacy scoring for admissions in universities	Improve Transfer Rates	87.8%
Support development of a solution for multi-year scheduling	Strategic Systems Development	87.8%

Policy	Policy Area	Agree + Strongly Agree
Call for equal investment in all students (CC students should receive comparable funding to 4-year students)	Equal Funding for Ed Sectors	87.5%
Support development of a national data mart measuring major outcomes	Strategic Systems Development	87.0%
Allow DACA/Dreamer students to receive the same educational services as U.S. citizens	Access/Completion Equity Gaps	86.6%
Require CC employees to complete equity-mindedness training	Access/Completion Equity Gaps	86.0%
Support diversity-balanced admissions at 4-year institutions	Improve Transfer Rates	85.5%
Encourage the university ranking systems (e.g., U.S. News and World Report) to place greater emphasis on social mobility	Improve Transfer Rates	84.1%
Develop a national score card on equity for all community colleges	Access/Completion Equity Gaps	82.1%
Support one integrated educational system (K16) to align curriculum and make transitions more seamless	Improve Transfer Rates	81.4%

In addition to the 36 policy questions in the survey, respondents were invited to submit comments on any of the survey questions or anything they thought the survey may have overlooked. About 250 respondents (22%) submitted comments. Two of the most frequent comments either expanded on ideas presented in the survey or raised issues that community colleges should implement internally and not germane to federal government involvement (ie., improve how counseling is delivered, improve internal processes).

The most emphatic comments, often expressed with a degree of frustration, tended to be related to social justice and federal government involvement. As more than one respondent noted, the survey had an underlying bias that presumed that community colleges should be actively involved in social justice work and that the federal government should increase their level of support for this work. These respondents are correct with regard to this underlying assumption. In fact, this assumption was clearly expressed in the introduction to the survey, stating that “The goal of this survey is to develop a data informed, national agenda for community colleges. The agenda will be used to advance federal support for community colleges and the vital role they play in social justice and equity.”

With this presumption, the survey did not ask respondents to weigh in on their thoughts about social justice overall or their attitudes about community college playing a role in social justice. There were also no overt questions about whether the federal government should be involved with community colleges in the first place. This led to some energetic opinions in the comments section with 40 to 50 individuals (approximately 4% of respondents) opposing the idea that community colleges should be involved with social justice and the notion that the federal government should be assisting.

General push-back on social justice came from negative comments regarding race/ethnicity considerations in admissions as well as hiring and other academic decision-making processes. Some comments opposed the calculation that social constructs help some groups and hinder others, arguing that marginalized group characteristics should be minimized or eliminated

in favor of more emphasis on individual merit. A few comments expressed frustration with equity-mindedness approaches. Some comments recommended DACA/Dreamer students receive less support than citizens. A few respondents expressed concern for maintaining academic standards under a social justice agenda.

Some respondents also expressed a general distrust of the federal government. Others were concerned over increased federal taxes, feared that federal programs might take resources from other federal services, felt that federal involvement will add a compliance drag on community colleges, expressed negative views of Secretary of Education DeVos, or expressed dissatisfaction with the role the federal government has played in K-12 education. Many comments reflected concerns about the system of federalism that we already work under in the U.S., where the balance between local, state and federal control is often a source of contention.

While the most emphatic comments opposed social justice and federal government involvement, the overwhelming majority of respondents supported these two goals. Averaging the scores for all 36 policy questions, a little over 90 percent indicated they *agree* or *strongly agree* with the policy suggestions, while a little less than 10 percent indicated they *disagree* or *strongly disagree*. In other words, over 90 percent support the concept of community colleges doing work in the social justice space, and over 90 percent are in favor of the federal government playing some kind of role.

A few comments emerged from bargaining units (unions). Some respondents voiced concern over the lack of institutional support for part-time faculty. Some called for federal assistance in supporting unions. A few commented on the unequal pay between part-time and full-time faculty as well as the disparities between university pay and community college pay. Others criticized unions for extending protection to individuals who practice racial discrimination or bias.

Federal government assistance with infrastructure issues was raised by a few respondents. Some recommended assistance with large construction projects as well as technology. Perhaps fueled by the pandemic and its impact on educators' lives while the survey was being administered, several called for help with communications technology and federal assistance for students who may not have access to the technology needed for online or web-enhanced instruction. Some respondents recommended federal help in moving away from large private technology systems and into more affordable ones.

A few comments were made about programs and services. There were calls for greater emphasis on STEM and arts education. Expanding mental health services was addressed several times as was the need for childcare services. CTE education, experiential learning, non-credit education, competency-based learning, technical colleges, and credit for prior learning were all addressed in a group of comments on workforce development issues.

STRATEGY AND NEXT STEPS

This survey helps identify six policy areas with specific policy recommendations under each that can frame a national agenda for community colleges. To implement these recommendations, there are four basic approaches the federal government can take: 1) Support or expand existing federal programs that focus on community colleges in a manner that addresses some of the concerns raised in the survey; 2) Expand existing federal programs focused on social justice issue into the community

college sector to address survey related issues; 3) Launch new federal programs that support the survey's policy recommendations; and 4) Incentivize states and higher education boards to move in these policy directions as conditions to receive federal funding.

First, federal programs are doing some of this work already. The community college sector needs to identify these programs and support or request their expansion in regard to some of the specifics addressed in the survey. For example, two positions in the Department of Education are designated to work with community colleges and promote community college initiatives. These resources could be expanded to help implement some of the policy recommendations of the survey.

Second, there are existing federal programs promoting social justice, but they have not targeted community colleges. For example, Housing and Urban Development (HUD) has provided technical assistance to public-private partnerships for housing, but this agency has not been involved with funding community college housing projects. HUD could expand its work to help address housing for housing-insecure students. We need to identify programs and work with their managers and corresponding legislators to find ways that they can expand their work throughout the community college sector.

Third, some of these recommendations will need to be established as new federal programs or funded by the federal government and established by an outside organization through a competitive bidding process. America's College Promise Act is a good example of a new policy that was originally proposed in 2015 and has been reintroduced every year since. The bill has not passed (yet), but it is a good example of a new program that would make two years of community colleges free for many students needing financial assistance. This would be a new program that addresses the number-one policy recommendation in the survey.

Fourth, the federal government commonly influences the behavior of other government and civic organizations by attaching requirements to federal funding. This is a strategy that could be used to encourage states and college/university boards to move in the policy directions recommended by this survey. For example, to eliminate legacy scoring for admission to some universities, thereby depriving less affluent applicants of a space, the federal government could stipulate the absence of this practice as a requirement to receive any federal funding. This is not a far stretch. Federal stipulations are already in place that prohibit overt racism or race-based discrimination in institutions that accept federal funds. Most scholars agree that legacy scoring embeds racial and income bias into the admissions process. Requiring the removal of these practices before federal funds are made available to universities seems consistent with existing requirements.

These four basic strategies describe the next round of work that will need to be completed in the development of a national agenda. The table below suggests how this work might be organized.

	Existing Education Programs	Existing Social Justice Programs	Possible New Policy/Program	Possible Incentives
1. Increase Funding/Resources for Students				
Support keeping community colleges affordable (0.986)				
Increase financial aid funding for students (0.916)				
Support/fund solutions for food-insecure students (0.913)				
Support/fund solutions for housing-insecure students (0.896)				
2. Close Access/Completion Equity Gaps				
Support diversity in hiring at CCs (0.924)				
Recognize CCs as essential to national social justice efforts (0.913)				
Support a national best practices dialogue around equity-mindedness in pedagogy, service, and management (0.911)				
Increase support for students from historically underserved communities (0.906)				
Allow DACA/Dreamer students to receive the same educational services as U.S. citizens (0.866)				
Require CC employees to complete equity-mindedness training (0.86)				
Develop a national score card on equity for all CCs (0.821)				
3. Improve Transfer Rates from CCs to Universities				
Support common course numbering for GE courses in CCs and 4-year institutions (0.938)				
Make sure all public 4-year institutions receive students with AA/AS degrees at junior level (3rd year) status (0.914)				
Sponsor a national scholars program to encourage low-income/high-GPA students to transfer to highly selective universities (0.909)				
End legacy scoring for admissions in universities (0.878)				
Support diversity-balanced admissions at 4-year institutions (0.855)				
Encourage the university ranking systems (e.g., U.S. News and World Report) to place greater emphasis on social mobility (0.841)				
Support one integrated educational system (K16) to align curriculum and make transitions more seamless (0.814)				
4. Support Job Placement				
Provide national mapping of career technical (CTE) programs to jobs (0.962)				
Support government data sharing with CCs for job placement tracking and CTE program recruitment (0.956)				
Develop a national apprenticeship program/network (0.954)				
Expand federal funding for development of CTE programs (0.937)				
Develop national standards for work-based learning and CC education (0.907)				
5. Funding Higher Education Sectors Equally				
Develop a report on funding across all higher education segments (How much money is invested in each sector?) (0.941)				
Support expansion of funding for counseling services in CCs (0.909)				

Support increase of full-time faculty in CCs (0.907)				
Increase balance between federal spending on research and teaching/learning (0.898)				
Encourage social justice related nonprofits to invest as much in CCs as they do in 4-year institutions (0.893)				
Call for equal investment in all students (CC students should receive comparable funding to 4-year students) (0.875)				

6. Develop Strategic Systems				
Support a solution for data-sharing between high schools and CCs for seamless enrollment (0.934)				
Support a solution to grant credit for prior learning for working adults (0.918)				
Support a solution to articulate military training into college credit (0.908)				
Support development of a solution for student progress tracking (0.905)				
Support development of a volunteer network to support students (0.898)				
Support development of a solution for multi-year scheduling (0.878)				
Support development of a national data mart measuring major outcomes (0.87)				

While there is additional work that needs to be done, there are three specific recommendations for community college leaders (trustees, managers, faculty leaders, staff leaders, and anyone else involved in community colleges leadership) that come out of this survey: 1) Claim our central role in social justice and upward mobility; 2) Formally adopt a comprehensive federal agenda; and 3) Engage through collaborative activism.

Recommendation #1

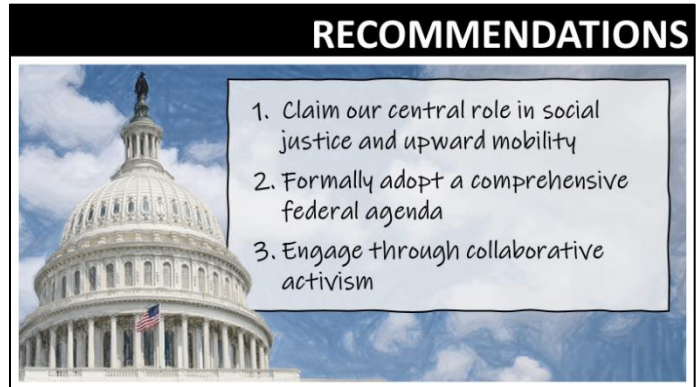
Community colleges leaders need to claim our central role in social justice and upward mobility. Throughout my career, I have grappled with our role in higher education and what makes us unique in the sector. Many of us are frustrated with narratives that explain our work in pejorative terms. Descriptions of community college work often feel externally constructed and derivative of university work. The notion that community colleges are primarily filled with students and personnel who are not quite university material is a common refrain held in popular culture and echoed across the university system where most of us are trained. We need to reject this framework and verbally embrace the unique and special mission of American community colleges. We are not ineffectual renderings of the university, rather, community colleges are institutions of higher education whose central role is equity. The work of the community college is the work of social justice and we carry this out in society at a greater volume, with greater intentionality, and through greater expertise than most of our 4-year colleagues. The idea of promoting social mobility through education is unconditionally and uncompromisingly embraced by community colleges at levels that are not seen in most of our 4-year institutions. In this sense, community colleges are central to a national strategy to end systemic inequality, discrimination, and racism. This needs to be our pedestal, and a consciousness of this role in society starts with community college leaders recognizing the role, embracing it, and claiming it out loud to the constituents we serve.

Recommendation #2

Community college leaders need to formally adopt a comprehensive federal agenda. This action recognizes that community colleges function in an ecosystem supported by a range of institutions and resources. Local, regional, state, and federal institutions make up this ecosystem and their interaction

with community colleges has an impact on the education our students receive. The survey clearly supports the idea that the federal government is part of this ecosystem but is not participating in a prominent enough manner. The federal government needs to direct greater attention, support, and resources toward community college students. A critical step we can take to elicit greater support from the federal government is to formally adopt an agenda that clearly articulates the role we expect the federal government to play in community college education.

Our national organizations already hold federal policy agendas, but they may need to consider broadening their official recommendations given the survey results. State organizations representing community colleges often have federal recommendations and should consider broadening/adopting some or all the issues raised in the survey. At our colleges and districts, elected/appointed board members should go through the deliberative process of articulating their expectations for federal support through adoption of a federal agenda. Constituent organizations like senates and unions often establish policy goals and need to make sure these are extended to the federal government. Finally, regional civic organizations who regularly establish federal policy goals should be invited to include some of these ideas into their own agendas.



Recommendation #3

Community college leaders should engage through collaborative activism. To encourage the federal government to move in these policy directions, we need to build greater levels of collaboration throughout the community college sector. This task is difficult because of the dispersed nature of the sector. There are several national organizations/groups that do work on behalf of community colleges; some do advocacy work in Washington. Throughout the country are organizations that represent their community colleges at the state level. Sometimes these are organized as chancellors' offices, others are run by executive directors of a state association, and others have commissions under the state department of education. Most colleges are organized and led by a local board of governors, often at the county level. Community College board members are typically elected or appointed by a state elected official (e.g., Governor). Within all of the organizations are constituent groups organized at state and federal levels themselves. Senior managers, faculty, staff, and trustees have organizations that represent the interests of their constituencies across the 50 states and in Washington D.C. Very often, the political, government relations, and communications arms of these organizations are directed at efforts to lobby against each other for greater pieces of the existing community college pie. This is part of the process and will probably always be part of our system's deliberation; however, we need to channel the considerable assets we share toward an effort to grow the overall size of the pie for the community college sector.

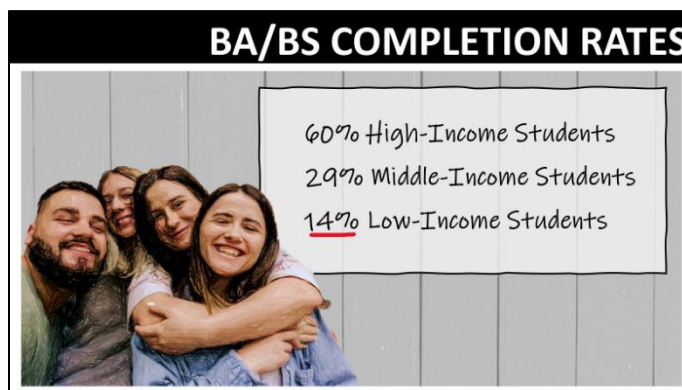
It may be too expensive for many colleges to organize collaboration through these groups in Washington D.C.; however, local members of the House of Representatives, U.S. Senators, and federal agencies often have local or regional offices that are close to our colleges. Through local resources, we

can create compelling pressure for a federal agenda through regular meetings in these offices using a collaborative approach where trustees, managers, senates, unions and local civic leaders collectively lobby under a unified agenda.

CONCLUSION

Our students from historically under-served communities start their academic journeys further back than students from more favored communities. To be successful, they are required to run a longer and more complicated race. They need to do it at a faster pace to keep up. And they need to do all of this with less agency. Because of these issues, they do not experience the same academic success that students from more favored communities do. For example, the percentage of students from high income backgrounds who complete bachelor's degrees is starkly higher than the percentage for students from middle- and low-income backgrounds. According to the National Center for Education Statistics and College for America, about 60% of freshman students from high-income families will earn a bachelor's degree, while approximately 29% from middle-income families will earn a bachelor's, and roughly 14% of freshman students from low-income families will complete their college journeys by receiving a bachelor's degree. What we have in our present history is a higher education system that helps affluent families maintain their privileged places in the U.S. while keeping many lower income people from accessing positions of prominence in society.

I do NOT think this outcome is intended by those of us working in higher education, but it is the clear impact higher education has continued to have on society. The institutions we rely on to create an environment where social mobility is real are actually part of the problem in contemporary America. The community college sector needs to take the lead to change this inequity. Our national imperative in this respect is clear. We need to make changes across our colleges and universities that cause more historically underserved students to enter college, succeed in college, complete college, and enter middle income (or higher) jobs. To be successful in this reform, we will need to make internal changes and receive greater support from all levels of government, including the federal government.



This report has detailed much of the support we need from the federal government to strengthen community colleges, and while there is additional work that needs to follow, there is one overwhelming conclusion I hope community college leaders take from these findings: Our college personnel support social justice work. Over 90 percent of respondents in our survey support work in this direction.

Nearly 60 years ago, Dr. Martin Luther King wrote from a prison cell in Birmingham about his frustration with leaders who openly claim to support social justice but lack the courage to do anything to advance it. As a community college leader, I hope this report encourages you to act boldly on behalf of our students. Act with urgency to disrupt the traditional structures that hold our students back,

knowing that while there may be a few voices who oppose these changes, a very large majority of our colleagues support work that leads to greater social justice.

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