



## **CONNECTICUT'S COMMUNITY COLLEGES AND THE KNOWLEDGE ECONOMY**

The foundation provided by all 12 of the Connecticut Community Colleges in liberal arts and sciences, career, occupational and technical fields of study prepare **over 50 percent** of the State's public college undergraduates to find their place in the Knowledge Economy. The educational programs and services of the Community Colleges provide a strong foundation for economic growth, business investment, and job creation by providing a pipeline of students with the educational foundation and adaptable skills needed for both the labor market and for more advanced levels of education. According to the President of the Lumina Foundation for Education, speaking at a meeting of the Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee on January 29, 2009, "The investment made in human capital through higher education is essential to the state's economic prosperity which is based on innovation and skilled labor."

### **ENROLLMENT – CREDIT AND NON-CREDIT**

In Fall 2008, a record high 51,105 students were enrolled in degree and certificate programs ranging from Liberal Arts and Sciences to Nursing and Emergency Services. This is the fifth year of record breaking growth in both headcount and FTE numbers at community colleges.

Another 40,000+ students will enroll during the fall and spring semesters in non-credit programs that build basic skills, communication and problem solving skills, and workforce competencies.

Since 1998, headcount has grown by 30% and FTE has grown by 54% in credit programs. The colleges are serving over one-third more students than they were a decade ago. There has been a 104% increase in full-time enrollment since 1998, yet the majority of students still study part-time (62%) while also working to support themselves and their families while attending college.

### **STUDENT DEMOGRAPHICS**

The average age of students is 27. Currently, 47% of all students are under age 22, yet 49% are between the ages of 22 and 50 indicating the significant role played by community colleges in educating Connecticut's adult learners.

Community Colleges provide access to educational opportunities, academic success, and higher levels of education for every learner including those with limited English proficiency. Improved skills, enhanced earning potential and an improved quality of life for themselves and their families are achievable goals for those who are educated and well prepared for the competitive job market of the global economy.

Nearly two-thirds of all the minority undergraduates enrolled in public higher education in Connecticut are attending community colleges. Minority enrollments represent 34% of the Community College student body reflecting an 85.6% increase at the twelve colleges since 1998. Thirty percent of total enrollments are African American and Hispanic students, and there has

been a 63% increase in African American enrollments in 10 years and a 96% increase in Hispanic enrollments in the same time period.

In the presentation to the Higher Education Committee in January, the Lumina Foundation's director urged "more investment in underprepared students, in institutions where their enrollments are growing, so that they will be able to overcome the academic achievement gaps that undermine their ability to succeed in college and careers in growing industries." He also emphasized the importance of remedial and collegiate coursework over more limited workforce training which addresses an immediate need rather than providing adaptable skills to meet changing needs.

## **COMPETING IN THE GLOBAL ECONOMY**

Community College students need access to affordable higher education to acquire the skills demanded for employment, to remain current with changing technology, and to transfer to higher levels of education that will help to advance to high demand, high wage jobs.

This is the type of higher education provided by Connecticut's Community Colleges working in partnership with business and industry, the public and non-profit sectors, secondary education and baccalaureate institutions, to meet a wide range of student and employer needs. Graduates see their annual income increase, on average by \$231 per year for every credit completed at Connecticut's Community Colleges.

Over a lifetime, associate degree graduates can earn approximately \$600,000+ in additional income as compared to high school graduates. Their annual salary is approximately 39% more than someone with a high school diploma. And their average lifetime earnings will increase by \$8.10 for every dollar they invest in their college education, an average 23% rate of return on their educational investment.

## **PROGRAMS KEEP PACE WITH STATE NEEDS AND STUDENT DEMAND**

### **TRANSFER OPPORTUNITIES**

Liberal Arts or General Studies programs enroll over one third of the colleges' students. Guaranteed admissions agreements with the Connecticut State Universities and the Liberal Arts and Sciences, Agriculture and Natural Resources programs at the University of Connecticut provide opportunities for Community College students to continue their educations on the four-year level. And numerous transfer articulation agreements are also in place with Connecticut's independent colleges and universities. Enrollments in Liberal Arts and General Studies programs have seen the largest growth (18%) between 2004 and 2008.

Like the UCONN Guaranteed Admissions Program, the agreement between the Connecticut Community Colleges and the Connecticut State University System will ensure system-to-system protocols that will create a seamless pathway from community college students to all four state universities. Ongoing conversations between the community colleges and the university systems continuation to explore broadening existing agreements and expanding opportunities for students to continue their educations through transfer to higher levels of education. The record-breaking

growth in the numbers of younger full-time students attending community colleges is clearly related as much to the expansion of opportunities for transfer as it is to the economy and costs.

In addition, the College of Technology, a curriculum pathway at the community colleges that guarantees admission to Central Connecticut, UCONN, and a number of independent institutions, continues to expand the state's supply of engineering and technology graduates through transfer programs and new opportunities such as Next Generation Manufacturing with funding provided by the National Science Foundation.

### **CAREER DEGREE PROGRAMS**

Approximately forty-five percent of enrollments are in occupational programs that prepare students for immediate employment in fields such as business, early childhood, health and life sciences, and the human services. Sixty percent of the allied health and nursing professionals, the radiation and respiratory care technicians, and the nuclear medicine and physical therapist assistants are prepared by Connecticut's Community Colleges. The five Community Colleges offering nursing associate degree programs are currently partnering with their local hospitals, healthcare and educational providers, to expand opportunities for students to enter the field of nursing in order to address the state's critical shortage of nurses.

### **NON-DEGREE AND SKILL BUILDING**

The remaining 19% of credit students choose to enroll in individual courses before selecting a field of study. These students benefit from additional educational experience and improved communication, team work, critical thinking skills. Many of these students indicate that they are not seeking a degree or certificate but are enrolling to obtain education and skill building in specific areas.

### **SHORT-TERM WORKFORCE TRAINING**

Non-credit programs also help to supply the skilled, technologically literate workforce required by the state's employers. Students taking non-credit programs, 46% of which are related to workforce development, also build communication, problem solving, and critical thinking skills as they focus on:

- Gaining new skills and improved literacy
- Remaining current with changing technology
- Obtaining employment and career advancement
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Examples of short-term workforce credentials include: Certified Nurse Assistant programs and EKG Technician programs.

### **WORKFORCE PARTNERSHIPS**

Over 600 businesses, organizations, and state agencies partner each year with the Community Colleges, their Continuing Education Departments and our Business & Industry Services Network. Whether through contract training developed to meet a specific business needs, involvement in curriculum development and in-kind contributions to leverage grant funding, or by providing clinical sites and co-op opportunities for community college students, Connecticut's businesses and industry rely on Connecticut's Community Colleges for well educated graduates and to upgrade the skills of their workforce.

## RESPONSIVE AND DIVERSE CURRICULA

Curriculum development at Community Colleges reflects a high level of responsiveness to the changing economy. Each year, new programs are added and low enrollment programs are terminated in light of market demand. In the past year, the Board of Trustees has approved new programs in Insurance and Financial Services, Pathway to Teaching Careers, Early Childhood Education, and Environmental Science, and Entrepreneurial Studies, Lean Manufacturing, Bimolecular Science. Over the past five years, the Board of Trustees has approved:

- 34 new Associate Degrees, 2 of which were on-line
- 664 new program options, 3 of which were on-line
- 88 new certificate programs, 5 of which were on-line
- 50 Program modifications
- 109 program terminations or suspensions

Beyond these efforts to keep curricula current and responsive to State and student needs, during the last three years, the Community Colleges have been successful in winning highly competitive Federal grants from the national Science Foundation and the U.S. Department of Labor to expand instruction and educational services to prepare students for 21<sup>st</sup> century careers in engineering technologies, advanced manufacturing, nursing and allied health, and the emerging green jobs of the energy industry.

The programs and services being implemented through these grants are based on best practices such as intensive academic support services, including embedded tutoring and comprehensive counseling that alleviate socioeconomic and academic disadvantages and encourage persistence and degree completion. These initiatives have the potential to increase the number of students entering and succeeding at the college level in order to enter growing fields of employment in the State. The Connecticut Department of Labor records indicate that earnings for students in targeted degree programs served by two of the grants (Nursing, Respiratory Care, Physical Therapy Assistant, Radiologic Technician and Medical Assistant) increased from \$23,626 in 2005 to \$57,740 in 2008 – a 144 percent increase.

In addition, three of our colleges and the System itself are recipients of Achieving the Dream grants designed to improve academic success and completion rates for low-income and minority students. This national initiative, funded by the Lumina foundation, Jobs for the Future, and the Nellie Mae Educational Foundation, is also leading to the identification and implementation of best practices that enhance retention and completion rates for these student populations.

According to the 2006 report by the Nellie Mae Education Foundation, New England 2020, Connecticut is predicted to have notable declines in its working age population as a result of retirements and outmigration. At the same time, the minority component of the working-age population will continue to increase. By 2020, the report predicts that more than a quarter of Connecticut's working-age population (28%) will be composed of minority populations. "The youngest workers ... are even more likely to be minorities than the general working age population. By 2020, nearly half of the 25-29 year olds will be minorities in the three southern New England states." These are the groups that face significant academic achievement gaps and that must overcome disadvantages to access and succeed in higher education.

“The economic impact of these gaps in educational attainment has the potential to affect Connecticut more seriously than its neighboring states since only in Connecticut has “white out-migration exceeded minority in-migration...”. The populations that are growing in Connecticut are not achieving the gains in educational attainment needed to ensure a competitive workforce.

*New England 2020, June 2006 - The Nellie Mae Education Foundation*

## **ACCESS TO TECHNOLOGY**

Investments at all twelve colleges in the system have implemented and upgraded instructional technology, faculty development programs and library and learning center resources, making access to technical education and the tools of technology available to every student. The Community Colleges continue to be the state’s largest provider of distance education through on-line courses with on-line FTE increasing by over 300% since Fall 2000.

Community Colleges were the first in the state to propose and implement on-line delivery of a full degree program in Computer Information Systems, Networking and Web Publishing. An on-line General Studies degree program is now being offered on a consortium basis with degrees awarded by seven of our 12 colleges.

## **TUITION COSTS AND COMPARISONS**

The Community College Board of Trustees carefully balances concerns over affordability of tuition and fees and the availability of financial aid to promote student access, with the need for sufficient resources to support academic program quality and provide vital student service support. Our Board has recognized that recurring costs must be supported through recurring revenues rather than by one-time resources, and seeks to implement modest, regular tuition and fee increases each year to cover cost increases while promoting stability and predictability of cost for students. Consistent with this policy, in December 2008, the Board of Trustees approved annual full-time tuition and fee increases of \$216 for 2010 and \$206 for 2011.

## **FINANCIAL ACCESS THROUGH STUDENT FINANCIAL AID**

A combination of federal, state, and college funding provided essential support for access to higher education for 44% of all community college students during FY 2007-08. Approximately \$59 million in student financial aid was awarded to 21,354 aid recipients. Approximately 62% came from federal sources; 19% came from institutional operating fund budgets; and 17% came from State resources primarily the Connecticut Aid to Public College Students Program. Eighty-six percent of the aid awarded at Community Colleges is in the form of grants to avoid student indebtedness.

In the 2008-2009 aid year, the Community Colleges have processed 43,042 applications which represents a 13% increase over 2007-2008, a 35% increase over 2004-2005, and a 108% increase over 2000-2001.

To date, in 2008-09, analysis of current applications reveals that:

- 91% of students/families project financial need to attend a Connecticut Community College, the lowest cost public higher education option in the state;

- 31% of applications show students/families possess zero financial resources to contribute towards a Community College education, and
- 57% of students/families possess financial resources insufficient to finance direct costs (tuition/fees, books) of a Community College education.

On-line information technology has also played a major role in promoting financial access to community colleges, 99% percent of all financial aid applications are now submitted on-line. Total financial aid applications increased more than 108% and awards more than 120% since the 2000-2001 award year implementation of our integrated student financial aid system. Pell Grant recipients have increased over 150% to approximately 16,000 students this year. We estimate Pell Grant expenditures will reach \$36 million this year an increase of over 150% since we implemented the new system.

### **SAVINGS INITIATIVES**

Since last spring when the State's financial circumstances began to decline, the Community College System has moved aggressively to contain our costs in order to continue providing essential educational services to the increasing numbers of students that turn to community colleges for opportunities especially during economic downturns.

In order to maintain maximum budgetary flexibility, we have restricted

- the refilling of vacant positions
- out-of-state travel
- use of consultants,
- purchase of other goods and services

The only exceptions to these limitations involve essential operations of the college and system and the continuation of academic programs and community services. Durational adjunct and clinical faculty, educational assistants and student workers are integral to providing instruction and services for a growing student population. Essential hiring is authorized based upon a college's financial analysis including identification of offsetting savings. In addition, management and confidential staff throughout the system have been requested to comply with the Governor's request for voluntary unpaid leave.

Through these restrictions, we have been able to deal with an ongoing structural shortfall for increased energy costs and to absorb rescissions to the current year's budget. We have reduced costs substantially and used reserve funds responsibly in order to maintain a level of budgetary flexibility which will provide us with the ability to continue to be responsive to ever-increasing student demand. We will continue to implement cost reductions to the greatest extent possible to meet the expectation for budgetary constraint in every area of our operations.

### **PRESERVING SERVICES FOR STUDENTS AND THE STATE**

The investment made in the Community College System is paying dividends for students, their families, the State and its businesses and industries. The System budget request seeks to preserve the return on the investment that has been made over the years. Throughout the budget, the needs of students and the state for affordable, accessible high quality, and lifelong learning opportunities are primary concerns reflected in financial terms. Embedded throughout the requests for funding support are the realities of student populations and enrollment demand,

demographic and labor market trends, instructional, administrative, and financial needs that face Community College education.

## **A CHALLENGING VISION**

A shared vision of student success has always been the spirit that brings the mission of community colleges to life. That vision has not changed since the founding of the first colleges and the system in the early 1960s. This vision is evident in the core values that differentiate community colleges from other institutions and it is supported by Board of Trustees policies that ensure affordable, accessible, and widely available educational opportunities to help students succeed.

While that vision of student success has not changed, and will continue to be the guiding principle of Board policy and programs, changes have occurred in student demographics, in workforce development, and in the economy of our state and our country that have challenged Connecticut's community colleges to expand and invest resources in order to enhance student success.

The changes in our society are reflected in our student population as seen in the academic and socioeconomic disadvantages that bring challenges for colleges that constantly exceed existing resources and challenge the ability of the colleges to be responsive to meeting student and state needs.

## **DIFFICULT CHOICES**

In the current budget climate of rescissions, reductions, and retrenchment the choices before us are truly daunting.

The unprecedented growth in student enrollment and the dramatic changes in student demographics, described above, require the Connecticut Community Colleges to address the changing needs of the student population. It is the responsibility of the system to address the expansion of programs and services necessary to meet the instructional, academic support and student service needs of these students.

At the same time, the State of Connecticut is striving to attract and retain business investment by providing the competitive advantage offered by a talented workforce and a climate that fosters business development. As the demand for well educated employees grows and growing numbers of students seek the opportunities offered by higher education, the Connecticut Community Colleges must be in the position to provide the opportunity for students to gain the knowledge and skills needed to achieve economic self sufficiency, employment opportunities, and an improved quality of life for themselves and their families.

That is the dilemma posed by the strategic priorities established by our Board of Trustees and college leaders, each of which is integral to the mission of Community Colleges and to meeting the needs of students and the State of Connecticut.

## **STRATEGIC PRIORITIES**

### **Expanding Access to Educational Opportunities: Supporting Student Success**

To promote student success our commitment to traditional access has been broadened to include access to the entire continuum of higher education and employment opportunities, working in partnership with high schools, colleges, universities, and employers so that the students who choose community colleges are prepared to succeed in college, to achieve their goals for further education, and to find opportunities for employment, independence and self-sufficiency. Community Colleges are actively involved and engaged in supporting students in:

- preparing for college
- increasing student retention, completion and graduation rates
- graduating and transferring to advanced levels of higher education
- entering and advancing in careers by addressing workforce skills gaps

### **Maintaining Affordability:**

#### **Tuition, Financial Aid and Resource Development**

Expanding access to success must also be supported by maintaining affordability. Our historic commitment to low tuition and fees can only be sustained by continuing efforts to ensure the availability of financial aid for the students we serve, the neediest and most needed of Connecticut's students. Additional support is provided for student access and success through an increased emphasis on resource development and the efficient use of resources.

### **Improving accountability:**

Creating a culture of evidence allows measurement of student success and evaluation of new approaches to engage and support students. Enhanced data collection, rigorous research, and reliable reporting all support decision making and demonstrate the effectiveness of our interventions on behalf of student success.

### **Improving learning and assessment:**

Improving the quality of student learning and outcomes assessment, requires a deeper understanding of how students learn and why they fail. Student outcomes, beyond traditional measures, and the barriers to learning that limit success call for enhanced assessment. These enhanced assessment efforts must be paired with professional development for college faculty and administrators that will help them to foster success for students through new models of instructional and educational services.

### **Ensuring a safe, secure, and inclusive campus environment:**

Another challenge for every college campus is the need to promote a safe and secure environment that encourages inclusion and respects diversity. Learning can only take place in an environment where concepts and ideas can be expressed and explored without fear. While a community of learners cannot be isolated from the external world, it can strive to ensure that violence is excluded from its boundaries and that open debate, challenging ideas, and different viewpoints are valued rather than feared.

These are the priorities and principles that inform the Community College System's planning, program development and delivery, but they are both challenges and choices that cannot be avoided if Connecticut and its economy are to prosper.