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The Office of Community College Research and Leadership (OCCRL) was established in 1989 at the University of Illinois at Urbana–Champaign. OCCRL is affiliated with the Department of Educational Policy, Organization, and Leadership in the College of Education. Projects of this office are supported by the Illinois Community College Board (ICCB) and the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE), along with other state, federal, private and not-for-profit organizations. The contents of publications do not necessarily represent the positions or policies of our sponsors or the University of Illinois. Comments or inquiries about our publications are welcome and should be directed to occrl@illinois.edu. The UPDATE is prepared pursuant to a grant from the Illinois Community College Board (Federal Award Identification Number is: V048A150013). ©2016 Board of Trustees, University of Illinois.

Our mission is to use research and evaluation methods to improve policies, programs, and practices to enhance community college education and transition to college for diverse learners at the state, national, and international levels.

**Director’s Note**

We’re one month into the new year with many of us still hopeful about new beginnings, desiring new experiences, and committed to new goals. Each new year evokes a fresh start. We are pleased that 2016 ushers in a new slate of featured articles that bring attention to important trends and current issues of importance to the community college sector.

Community colleges are an essential mechanism for providing opportunities for students not traditionally nurtured by four–year institutions. Among the multiple postsecondary pathways that community college offer, entrepreneurship programs have become what Paul Magelli refers to as the “Third Pathway.” In an interview with Janice Li North, Magelli shares how community colleges are preparing students with business skills and exposing them to entrepreneurial development.

Besides entrepreneurial development, workforce development has remained a high priority for community colleges. Workforce training and development have also been priorities of the Obama administration. In 2010, President Obama authorized $2 billion dollars to fund the Trade Adjustment Assistance Community College and Career Training (TAACCCT) Grant Program over four years through signing the Health Care and Education Reconciliation Act. Debra Bragg, Matthew Giani, and Heather Fox share findings from the Health Professions Pathways Consortium’s efforts to expand and improve healthcare education and employment success in this high growth industry sector.

The health of our nation is dependent on fueling the pipeline to college and degree completion. Kadeem Fuller and I discuss the growing pipeline to prison and how community colleges promote postsecondary educational access behind bars. In addition, community colleges are known for providing other alternative on–ramps to higher learning. In the case of dual credit/dual enrollment programs, they offer an accelerated pathway. Ken Sheffel, President of the National Alliance of Concurrent Enrollment Partnerships (NACEP) explains three views on concurrent enrollment – illuminating the local, state, and national context for these initiatives.

Another means of expediting baccalaureate attainment are applied baccalaureate (AB) degree programs. Recent research on the implementation of AB programs across the country is presented by Debra Bragg and Maria Soler Salazar. Rounding out this issue of Update on Research and Leadership, Jason Taylor and Matthew Giani turn the spotlight on yet another route to the baccalaureate with reverse transfer of credit. While many students leave community colleges without credentials, new articulation agreements to award associate degrees are emerging. Taylor and Giani tell us about the Credit When It’s Due (CWID) initiative and Maria Soler Salazar. Rounding out this issue of Update on Research and Leadership, Jason Taylor and Maria Soler Salazar.

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Welcome to an issue of Update like no other! As you read this edition you will notice fresh perspectives on timely topics plus a fresh new look. We hope you find our new PDF format featuring flip page e-reading engaging as well as lengthier articles that boasts bold colors, graphics, and most importantly content. If you like what’s in this issue, feel free to share via Twitter, LinkedIn and Facebook. Happy Reading!

Eboni M. Zamani-Gallaher

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The UPDATE on Research and Leadership is a bi–annual newsletter featuring articles on programs, policies, and research highlighting transitions to, through, and out of postsecondary education. Was this newsletter forwarded to you? Sign up for the OCCRL mailing list to receive news and updates our work.

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Entrepreneurship Education as a Third Pathway for Community Colleges: An Interview with Paul Magelli
by Janice Li North, OCCRL Graduate Research Assistant

Community colleges are typically known for their CTE and transfer offerings. Alongside these traditional pathways, however, courses, certificates and associate’s degrees in entrepreneurship point the way to a new and innovative kind of education, even a third pathway through community colleges. To explore entrepreneurship education, OCCRL’s Janice Li North interviewed Paul Magelli, Senior Director at the Academy for Entrepreneurship Leadership and Visiting Professor of Economics Emeritus at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign.

Paul Magelli brings an array of practical and educational experience in the field of entrepreneurship education. At age 8, Magelli and his twin brother started their first business selling goat milk. Six years later, they joined three elder brothers as partners in Magelli Brothers Super Markets. In 1956 at age 25, Magelli left the business and began his undergraduate studies in economics at the University of Illinois. He completed his PhD at Illinois and also discovered a talent and vocation for education and administration. His past positions include Dean of Fairmont College of Liberal Arts and Sciences at Wichita State University in Wichita, Kansas; Vice President for Academic Administration at Drake University in Des Moines, Iowa; and, President of Metropolitan State University of Denver, Colorado. Magelli is also President Emeritus of Parkland College in Champaign.

Magelli holds a Doctor of Law, honoris causa, from the University of Bristol, UK, where he helped to establish the Bristol Enterprise Centre. In May 2016, he will be awarded an honorary doctorate from Wichita State University for his lifetime achievement and visionary leadership. Paul has served as a Scholar-in-Residence at Kauffman Foundation, advising on the development and implementation of initiatives to advance entrepreneurship training and knowledge in American higher education. He continues to serve on numerous boards of technology-based firms. The Academy for Entrepreneurship Leadership was established, through the support of the Kauffman Foundation, with the aim of infusing entrepreneurship across the curriculum at the University of Illinois. Could you highlight some of your main initiatives and achievements?

Magelli: We are reaching the conclusion our current implementation plan (2010–2015) so let me focus on initiatives during the first years of the award. Our first objective was faculty development. Entrepreneurship is a relatively new field of study with limited numbers of faculty who hold a PhD in entrepreneurship. This is true not only at the University of Illinois but nationwide. At the same time, however, there was increasing student demand for content, courses, and engagement in entrepreneurship. To develop academic content the Academy identified, through a campus wide competition, faculty in related fields who would bring workplace experiences and/or a research interest in entrepreneurship, innovation, and new firm creation. Funding from the Kauffman Foundation enabled us to recruit highly qualified faculty as Academy Fellows. The fellows developed extensive academic offerings by integrating entrepreneur-concepts into existing courses or by designing new courses. Through the faculty fellowships we built bridges to qualified faculty as Academy Fellows. The fellows developed extensive academic offerings by integrating entrepreneur-concepts into existing courses or by designing new courses. Through the faculty fellowships we built bridges to

and between colleges — engineering, business, fine arts, and education, actually all thirteen degree-granting colleges on campus. As a result, the Academy ultimately included nearly 60 fellows across the university. In a given semester as many as 80 different courses are offered with as many as 8,000 students, graduate and undergraduate enrolled.

The Academy also participates in collaborations and activities such as the Venture Accelerator for student startups, the Enterpriseworks Incubator located in the University Research Park, Social Focus networking events, and the Cozad Business Plan competition. And, as a new enterprise itself, the Academy received venture funding from the Kauffman Foundation with the expectation that the University would generate additional financial support to build and sustain these efforts. Groundwork is being laid for a capital campaign as part of the university’s upcoming 150th anniversary, which will define the next stage in the life of the Academy for Entrepreneurship Leadership.

Turning to community colleges, do you see a similar level of activity and interest in entrepreneurship education?

Magelli: Together with Dr. Cindy Kehoe and a team of researchers, we are just completing an exhaustive inventory of entrepreneurship education in higher education around the country including community colleges — again with financial support from the Kauffman Foundation (Magelli & Kehoe 2016). Based on a review of over 1600 community colleges1, the research team has determined that there has been an infusion of entrepreneurship into the curriculum, in addition to or alongside the traditional focus on small business management. You might ask, what’s the difference? Small business management entails the know-how to manage a small—or a medium-sized business. To this set of skills entrepreneurship adds the dimensions of business innovation, new firm creation, business scaling, partnerships, mergers and enterprise growth.

1. Degree-granting, accredited two-year colleges (which also included for-profit institutions) as designated by the Carnegie Classification served as the selection criteria for this study.
Specifically, increasing demands on shrinking or static budgets also limit the prospects of adding new faculty or retooling faculty to teach new offerings. Like new firm creation, new educational programming requires financial resources, particularly as student interest and demand grow. Faculty fellowships in the Academy aforementioned translated into the time and resources to develop new courses and areas of study. In contrast, faculty at community colleges often have fixed and defined instructional responsibilities, are teaching full-time, and, with limited resources, new program development is a tremendous challenge.

At the community college level, what kind of credentials does an instructor need? Magelli: An appropriate set of credentials is a mix of business and teaching expertise. A course really benefits from instructors who have had entrepreneurial experience, new firms, been successful, and can enable students to see the myriad steps required to develop an idea into an enterprise. But there is the concern that this can result in teaching simply by telling “war stories” without the appropriate blend of the analytical and conceptual along with the experiential. Instructors as it stands may have one knowledge base or the other. Ideally they would have both. And this ideal points to a kind of career path for instructors who move back and forth between business and education. Someone might obtain a bachelor’s or an MBA, spend time in a business environment, come back and pursue more graduate studies, possibly obtaining a PhD, which deepens his or her understanding of research, theory, and teaching methods. There are enormous opportunities in the Academy for these individuals as students seek, even insist upon, more pragmatic engagement.

But what “technical” qualifications or certifications does this entail? I think the teaching of entrepreneurship is at a very early stage of development. We have a limited number of advanced entrepreneurship degree-holders, and in a broader sense, entrepreneurship is a nascent field or discipline that is not yet widely recognized within higher education. I think the answer lies in a greater focus on professional development along two pathways: academic training and education for those with business experience, and more business immersion opportunities for college instructors.

I am optimistic about the development of the field. I think it’s an iterative learning process as colleges and universities work out the right professional development models that can foster entrepreneurship educators who combine business experience, academic rigor, and sophistication. Ultimately, I think students will benefit from a teacher who has both done it and can teach it successfully. In a sense, this is not new. We want teachers of science, law, and medicine, for example, to have experience in the laboratory, the courtroom, or the clinic. The challenge is to dedicate financial and institutional resources that will build and empower this kind of career path.

Can you speak to examples of successful entrepreneurship in community colleges? Magelli: In general terms, a solid program begins with an introductory course that provides students the basic tools and vocabulary concerning opportunity recognition and actualization, competitive intelligence and industry analysis, for instance. Then, there are the traditional courses in finance, economics, accounting, and management that supplement or complement the entrepreneurship pursuit. Additionally, a program will offer a series or a specialization in entrepreneurship, new enterprise investment and financing, or business scaling for example. In all, an entrepreneurship program will have a basic entry point, then do two things: first, it will respond to the students’ interests and directions, and second, it will lead them toward new educational horizons that enhance their individual pathways.

Is there any research on the community college pathway that community college students end up taking, based on their education and training? Magelli: As researchers, we need to know more about outcomes: enterprises created, future academic paths, and the overall economic impact of entrepreneurship education. Unfortunately, in the absence of significant longitudinal studies, we do not know the aggregate impact. This is a question and issue that begs for more study and research.

However, let me point to a different set of outcomes, or perhaps educational aims. A student who takes an entrepreneurship course or who completes a program may or may not start a new business. What else do they gain from their studies? I would say they gain an understanding of law, of the economy, of public policy; they learn leadership and management skills; they acquire tools or ways of doing analysis; they learn how to develop and complete a successful project. This kind of awareness and ability can translate into a range of successful careers, not just new firm creation. Again, unfortunately, we do not have the type of longitudinal study that would document my assertion.

Do you have any final thoughts on entrepreneurship education and community colleges? Magelli: At the heart of a flourishing economy is business innovation, new firm creation, and successful ventures. These translate into a healthy mix of wealth creation, job creation, tax revenues, and a citizenry with a stake in the success of the economy and public policy. Community colleges serve as the grassroots educational foundation by meeting student demand and providing them with the kind of entrepreneurial education that will prepare them to play a vital role in these many important aspects of society. This of course calls for administrative leadership and financial investment. But I think the payoff for students and the broader economy are immense.

Alongside wealth creation, another important part of entrepreneurship is wealth distribution to meet the needs of a growing population. In this sense, the entrepreneurial mindset is also one of civic responsibility. I would say that an important dimension to entrepreneurship education, which we see in many corporations, is social responsibility: how to give back. This is more important than innovation or enterprise, it is the attention to the human condition.

Reference

Janice Li North may be reached at jlnorth2@illinois.edu. Paul Magelli may be reached at pmagelli@illinois.edu.

College Exemplars in Entrepreneurial Education Cited by Magelli
- Johnson County Community College (Overland Park, KS) offers a series of basic entrepreneur courses and specialization courses tailored to specific industries or business sectors.
- Montgomery County Community College (Blue Bell, PA) offers a 30 credit hour entrepreneurship management certificate that combines a range of course from business planning and business law to ethical decision making.
- Chabot College (Hayward, CA) offers a range of specialized entrepreneurship programs in music recording, real estate, and family childcare.
- Columbia College (Columbia, MI) takes concepts of entrepreneurship and relates them to specific industries such as culinary arts, automotive technology, or communication technology. Columbia College is also home to the Steven and Barbara Fishman Center for Entrepreneurship (Mr. Fishman is president and chairman of Big Lot; and the Fishmans are both college alumni), which offers mentorship, internships, networking, and seed capital for startups.
- Southern State Community College (Hillsboro, OH) offers an associate’s degree in entrepreneurship infused with courses in speech, ethics, law, leadership and psychology.
The Impact of the Health Professions Pathways Consortium

by Debra D. Bragg, OCCRL founding director
Matt Gian, Research Scientist, Office of Strategy and Policy, University Texas at Austin
Heather L. Fox, OCCRL Project Coordinator

The Trade Adjustment Assistance Community College and Career Training (TAACCCT) grant was launched in 2011 by the United States Department of Labor (DOL), in partnership with the United States Department of Education. The Office of Community College Research and Leadership (OCCRL) at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign conducted the third–party evaluation of the Health Professions Pathways (H2P) Consortium that was funded with a Round One TAACCCT grant of over $19M. The evaluation had three major components: 1) implementation evaluation, 2) impact evaluation, and 3) service performance on behalf of the H2P Consortium to the DOL. This executive summary highlights major results of the H2P Consortium, taking into account programs that was funded with a Round One TAACCCT grant of over $19M. The evaluation had three major components: 1) implementation evaluation, 2) impact evaluation, and 3) service performance on behalf of the H2P Consortium to the DOL.

The Impact of the Health Professions Pathways Consortium

The other two strategies demonstrate a larger commitment to transformative change in healthcare education and training in and beyond the H2P Consortium. These strategies include enhanced data and accountability systems, including sustaining and scaling the reforms, and galvanizing a national movement to build momentum for transformative change in healthcare education. The Consortium works in partnership with major healthcare employers and workforce partners to effect transformative change on a national scale. Through strategic development of networked partnerships, the Consortium is leveraging the national TAACCCT stage to build momentum for transformative change in curriculum reform, most notably scaling the healthcare occupations core curriculum. Please see OCCRL (2015) Third-party Evaluation of Implementation of the Health Professions Pathways Consortium: Nine Co–Grantee College Site Reports for in-depth description of the implementation of strategies by H2P.

Educational Outcomes

In terms of the educational outcomes of H2P students, our analyses revealed that the majority of H2P participants received educational benefits from participating in a grant–funded program of study, and there is compelling evidence that the reforms that H2P colleges implemented made a positive impact on the attainment rates of healthcare students. Of the 4,888 students who enrolled in a program of study that was created or modified through TAACCCT funds, roughly two-thirds had either earned a postsecondary credential or were still enrolled in their H2P co–grantee college by the Fall 2014 semester, and this figure was higher than 90% at one college. More than 1,000 long–term certificates and associate’s degrees were awarded to students, in addition to more than 1,000 short–term and very short–term certificates. Nearly one out of every ten students who earned a credential earned more than one, supporting the assumption that the stackable credential strategy improved credential attainment rates for H2P participants. Additionally, our analyses provide support that H2P increased the likelihood that students enrolled in healthcare programs of study would complete their credentials, particularly in regards to the LVN/LPN programs across colleges. H2P participants in LVN/LPN programs were roughly 18% more likely to earn that credential compared to a comparable group, and this likelihood increased the likelihood that students completed their program of study. Additionally, the Consortium is leveraging the national TAACCCT stage to build momentum for transformative change in curriculum reform, most notably scaling the healthcare occupations core curriculum. Please see OCCRL (2015) Third-party Evaluation of Implementation of the Health Professions Pathways Consortium: Nine Co–Grantee College Site Reports for in-depth description of the implementation of strategies by H2P.
High Impact Strategies

Out of the six student-focused strategies emphasized by the Consortium, four stand out as particularly important in terms of the number of students who participated and the degree of student engagement. These strategies are enhanced retention services, stackable credentials, healthcare occupation core curriculum, and credit for prior learning.

Enhanced Retention Services
Bolstered by the student success/retention coaches hired with grant funds, all co-grantee colleges increased efforts to provide students with intrusive advising and targeted retention services to increase their chances of success.

H2P used a four-pronged approach to enhanced retention services: a) build relationships with community-based organizations and workforce partners, b) provide students career planning services, c) provide proactive advising, and d) provide technology-assisted employment services.

Among three of the colleges that collected particularly detailed data on retention services, 2,221 students received 14,473 individual services, for a total of 9,504 hours of services, or roughly 4.5 hours of services per student who received retention services.

Stackable Credentials
The H2P Consortium selected industry-recognized stackable credentials with the goal of accelerating time to completion and streamlining pathways to the labor market for students (H2P Consortium, 2011).

Eleven sets of stackable credentials, involving 13 new industry-recognized credentials, were developed or enhanced through the H2P grant.

Fifteen percent of all credential earners (356 graduates) earned multiple credentials, and an additional 523 students were continuing their studies after having earned at least one credential.

Credit for Prior Learning
The Consortium selected this strategy as a means to recognize the knowledge and skills gained by displaced and incumbent workers through previous work and life experience (H2P Consortium, 2011).

A Healthcare Occupations Core Curriculum
A competency-based healthcare occupations core curriculum was implemented to some extent at all nine colleges.

In total, 2,202 students enrolled in one of the 40 healthcare occupation core curriculum courses implemented across the Consortium, for a total of 3,682 student–course enrollments with an overall pass rate of 97.5%.

Given that only El Centro College had a pre-existing healthcare occupations core curriculum, the breadth and depth of implementation of this strategy by the Consortium is noteworthy.

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Altering the Pipeline to Prison and Pathways to Postsecondary Education
by Eboni M. Zamani-Gallaher, OCRL Director
Kadeem Fuller, Office of Multicultural Affairs Graduate Mentor, University of Illinois at Urbana–Champaign

The United States prides itself on being a world leader in many areas. For instance, the nation is a leader in technology, natural gas production, and wind power. There are many other areas in which the United States is a recognized world leader, including the incarceration of its people. During the last four decades, the United States has experienced a 500% increase in imprisonment (Mauer & King, 2007) and well over two million people are presently incarcerated in jails and prisons around the country (Carson, 2015). When combined with the formerly incarcerated who are under correctional supervision in the form of parole or probation that number increases to 7 million (Rivera, 2015). With 698 people in prison for every 100,000, the United States ranks first in the world, with Rwanda (492 per 100,000) and Russia (446 per 100,000) running a distant second and third in mass incarceration (Walmsley, 2015).

Mass incarceration in this country is costly. One out of every 15 state general fund discretionary dollars is spent on the U.S. criminal justice system with 90% spent on prisons (American Civil Liberties Union, 2015). This is roughly $80 billion annually spent on jailing 2.4 million people in America (Kearney, Harris, Jachome, & Parker, 2014). While federal prisons from Alcatraz to super-max facilities are more famous in popular culture, the fact is 98% of the nation’s incarcerated are housed in state prisons (Spycher et al., 2012). In 2013, this translated into nearly $52 billion in state expenditures (National Association of State Budget Officers, 2013). Despite continuing fiscal burdens on states, especially amid the country’s recovery from the Great Recession, prison populations continue to increase rapidly. How did this happen?

The War on Drugs and Mass Incarceration

The "war on drugs" was popularized in 1971 when President Nixon launched a national campaign to combat what he declared to be “public enemy number one.” To understand the connection between the war on drugs and mass incarceration, it is helpful to view the former along multiple axes. First, the war was waged by Republican administrations such as Nixon and Regan, and Democratic presidents including Carter and Clinton, and even dating back to the Johnson administration. Thus, the war on drugs spanned decades and was waged by both political parties.

Second, the war entailed two areas of operation and policy fields, foreign and domestic. Foreign policy introduced to Americas to their Latin American neighbors through political, military, and paramilitary interventions in Panama, Nicaragua, and Columbia, among others, which were part of a complex engagement with drug trafficking and regional realpolitik. On the domestic side, the war enlisted legislation, law enforcement, the courts, and prisons in order to eradicate drug sales and use within the country. Federal legislation enlisted an expanded list of Schedule I controlled substances including crack cocaine, which erected the legal framework for law enforcement; and, it entailed minimum mandatory sentences for drug convictions, which structured court procedures. State politics and policy followed suit, with the most notable war waged in California, which invoked the baseball adage, “Three strikes and you’re out.” While three-strike laws sprung up in multiple states aimed at violent crime, non-violent convictions — including drug convictions — were swept up in the policy (Courtwright, 2014).

The multiple axes of the war on drugs combined systematically to criminalize, arrest, convict, and incarcerate individuals at a profound rate. Consequently, prison populations swelled. For example, between 1987 and 2006, the U.S. prison population increased threefold from 585,084 to 1,596,127, reaching its present level of over 2 million. In 2010, the U.S. federal government spent over $15 billion dollars on the War on Drugs accounting for $500 every second (Miron & Waldock, 2010). The questions with any war of course are what we gain and who’s affected. In too many places, black boys and black men, and Latino boys and Latino men, experience being treated different under the law.”

President Barack Obama, NAACP Annual Convention, July 14, 2015

During his remarks at the NAACP convention, President Obama discussed the flaws in the U.S. justice system noting that it “remains particularly skewed by race and by wealth” (Liptak, 2015). The President observed that the interplay between arrests, convictions, and time served with race and income is not anecdotal and is not “barber shop talk” but an empirical fact, supported in evidence.

Research has found a statistically significant racist effect on sentencing and imprisonment with African Americans receiving the harshest sentences by race and ethnicity, representing approximately half of those in jail (Bobo & Johnson, 2004; Mauer & King, 2007; Mitchell, 2005). There is a racialized criminal profiling of males of color that corresponds with disparate sentencing and imprisonment (Mauer & Huling, 1995; Welch, 2007). Case in point, from 1980 to 2000 the rate of African American incarceration tripled, making the ratio of incarceration between Blacks and Whites 8 to 1 (Blumstein, 2001). There is a disproportionately higher number of individuals from low-income, racially, and/or ethnically underserved backgrounds overrepresented in prisons, many of which have low levels of educational attainment (Coley & Barton, 2006). When considering American incarceration by race/ethnicity and gender, males are incarcerated in larger numbers than females and people of color at higher rates than their white counterparts (Alexander, 2010; Blumstein, 2001; Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2004). While African Americans make up 13% of the U.S. population, 1 out of 6 African American males are incarcerated. Latinos account for 17% of the population, with 1 out of 36 Latino men incarcerated. In contrast, Whites make up 77% of the population, with 1 out of 106 White males incarcerated (Kerby, 2012; U.S. Census Bureau, 2015).

Not surprisingly, education levels correspond with levels of incarceration. According to Pew Charitable Trusts (2010), when considering incarceration by educational attainment, 1 in 3 black men, 1 in 14 Hispanic men, and 1 in 8 White men between the ages of 20 and 34 who are without a high school diploma or GED are incarcerated. In all, 40% of state and federal inmates do not hold a high school diploma or GED -- double the national rate (Tolbert, 2012). Moreover, less than 25% have some form of postsecondary education (Contardo & Tolbert 2008).

Who is Locked Up and Locked Out of Opportunities?

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The price of mass incarceration — the war on drugs, gangs, poverty, and racial profiling, among other factors, is paid disproportionately by generations of males of color. If the solution to war on drugs was mass incarceration, the latter begets its own set of problems that rise to the level of public enemies. For example, 95% of all inmates who are released will be available at some point (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2004). The outcomes are predictable and interconnected — on the one hand, few educational or employment opportunities and recidivism on the other. A Pew Center study found that 4 in 10 prisoners committed new crimes or violated the terms of their release, and were incarcerated again (The Pew Center on the States, 2011). There is less spent on education than incarceration (American Civil Liberties Union, 2015; Kearney, Harris, Jácome, & Parker, 2014). Mass incarceration is a phenomenon that once created, expands and regenerates itself. What is to be done?

Building a New Pipeline: Prison to School to Society

“He who opens a school door, closes a prison.” — Victor Hugo

The history of American prison education, is a study in the central tension between punishment and rehabilitation. The Penitentiary Act of 1799, for example, combined solitary confinement with labor and religious instruction. In the early 1800s (alongside capital punishment), the Quakers advocated for the humane treatment and the moral uplifting of prisoners. Later in the 19th and early 20th centuries, model prisons in New York, Pennsylvania, and elsewhere instituted systems of education as well as democratic participation for inmates. For example, Zebulon Brockway instituted a system of academic and vocational education, sports, and military discipline at Elmira Reformatory in New York State.

The 1950s saw a return to reform in which even the term “prison” was replaced by “correctional institution,” and education mapped coincide with growing emphasis on behaviorism and psychoanalytic therapy. Present-day prison education can trace its origins to the 1970s, in the same period interestingly, as the commencement of the war on drugs.

The Pell Grant Program, enacted in 1972 as the Basic Educational Opportunity Grants, sought to offer students with financial need grants that would provide modest college aid. Among those eligible for Pell grants were incarcerated individuals. Inmate participation was a small component of the total Pell grants awarded. In fact, less than 1% of Pell recipients were incarcerated inmates and did not adversely affect Pell grants available for other students demonstrating financial need (U.S. GAO, 1994). However, inmate eligibility was no mere afterthought. Senator Claiborne Pell of Rhode Island, sponsor of the program, felt strongly that postsecondary opportunities should be extended to inmates. He declared, “As I have often said, education is our primary hope for rehabilitated prisoners. Without education, I am afraid most inmates leave prison only to return to a life of crime” (Congressional Record, 1994). The numbers bear this out. Pell grants for prisoners are critically important given the correlation between educational attainment and lower recidivism rates (Duwe & Clark, 2014; Harer, 1995). Another study found that the recidivism rate within three years of release was 43% less for those who participated in a prison education programs (Davis, Bozick, Steele, Saunders, & Miles, 2013). In addition, nearly 600 crimes are prevented for every $1 million invested on correctional education in contrast to 350 crimes prevented applying the same amount on incarceration only (Bazos & Hausman, 2004). In all, postsecondary education behind bars is arguably both a public and private good as an individual’s risk of recidivating is lower, odds of gaining employment following release increase, and state costs of incarceration over time decrease (Davis et al., 2013, 2014).

In 1994, however, Pell grants for inmates became a casualty of the war on drugs. That year, the Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act, written in part by then-Senator Joe Biden, and signed into law by President Clinton, eliminated inmate eligibility for Pell grants. Because most inmates who work earn pennies on the dollar — pointing to its own set of moral and economic problems — they simply cannot pay for their education. Consequently, the effect of eliminating Pell eligibility was profound. Prior to 1994, college programs were offered to inmates in 39 of the 50 states (Lilia, 1994; Messemer, 2003). In addition, Tewksbury, Erickson and Taylor (2000) report that “92% of correctional systems offered some form of post-secondary educational programming in 772 prisons, enrolling more than 38,000 inmate students” before 1994. Two years later, 63% of correctional systems offered educational programming, with a 44% decrease in enrollment. As part of the decline of prison education, important dimensions, such as course diversity and credential stepping stones, from certificate and associate’s degree to bachelors’ and even graduate degrees, suffered. By 2005, only 32% of all state prisons offered postsecondary education, with only 10% of inmates enrolled in courses. On the federal side, 98% of federal prisons offered education programs, though only 13% of inmates were enrolled (Spycher, Shkodrani & Lee, 2012).

On the federal level, the Department of Education’s Office of Career, Technical, and Adult Education (OCTAE) houses the government’s education efforts in juvenile justice confinement facilities, as well as many detention centers, jails and prisons, with the aim of rehabilitating criminal populations. In addition, the Second Chance Act (2013) established the program titled “Promoting Reentry Success through Continuity of Educational Opportunities” (PRSEEO), administered by the Bureau of Justice Assistance, which included a one-time discretionary grant opportunity totaling $924,036. Through the program, adult education providers in Kansas, Pennsylvania, and Wisconsin were awarded grants to develop correctional education and workforce training programming geared to ease inmate transition post-incarceration utilizing the U.S. Department of Education’s Reentry Education Model for the betterment of low-skill individuals in corrections (Tolbert, 2012).

Various local and state prisons have provided education programs through other avenues of federal support. For example, the Office of Correctional Education (OCE) was created in 1991 by the Carl D. Perkins Vocational and Applied Technology Education Act to improve coordination and support for correctional education. The Office of Career, Technical and Adult Education (OCTAE) Division of Adult Education and Literacy (DAEL) houses the OCE (U.S. Department of Education 2015). Much of the education of inmates beyond the high school diploma or General Equivalency Diploma (GED) level is geared to provide skills that can serve as a foundation to reintegrate individuals, post-incarceration, and to help them acquire the requisite skills — life, academic, and vocational — necessary for a successful transition from prison.

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Postsecondary Prison Education in Practice

RCC Correctional Education Programs
Richland Community College (RCC) contracts with the Illinois Department of Corrections to provide postsecondary correctional education. RCC postsecondary education programs are housed across several correctional facilities and involve full- and part-time college faculty and staff. General studies courses are offered as well as occupational, career development, in addition to college-level coursework for inmates.

California Community Colleges
Four prisons in California have partnered with community college programs to begin offering courses (i.e., 2–3) beginning fall 2015 that will provide an opportunity for students to receive an associate’s degree in Liberal Arts (Rivera, 2015). In California, alone, there are over 6,000 incarcerated students enrolled in distance learning programs. The partnering between California prisons and community colleges, in Illinois and California among other states, appears to be a promising and effective relationship that could be successfully replicated across the county.

Where Things Stand Now
Returning to the basic tension between punishment and rehabilitation, the pendulum seems to be swinging in the latter direction. There has been a surge of interest in recent years about how to equip our nation’s incarcerated with the skills and tools needed to return to society and to help them prepare to earn a livable wage and lead a crime-free life. On our standpoint, community colleges are positioned to play a vital role in fashioning pathways to postsecondary education and promising future. In closing, we hope this essay serves to provoke thought on the complex landscape of incarceration and the potential of community college research and practice to advance educational policy and social justice for a discounted population of learners.

References

Then, on July 30, 2015, Education Secretary Arne Duncan and Attorney General Loretta Lynch announced the Obama administration’s new Second Chance Pell Pilot Program while visiting a Maryland correctional facility. While the administration’s pilot initiative will not lift the ban on Pell grants for prisoners absent congressional approval, the Department of Education does have the authority to reinstall access to federal Pell grants for inmates temporarily (Collins, 2015). The aim of this initiative is to provide Pell grant funding to incarcerated individuals that are qualified students eligible for release from prison within five years of program enrollment. The administration feels that if students are provided with high-quality educational opportunities and given skills necessary to succeed in society, the future life trajectories of former inmates will improve and recidivism will be prevented.

The Obama Administration’s announcement that Pell grants are returning to incarcerated students for a pilot program shows a return to recognizing correctional education as a public good and an important part of individual rehabilitation. Over the past decade, the number of course offerings delivered by community colleges or technical schools in academic and vocational/career technical education programs have been reduced or eliminated across 20 states (Davis et al., 2014). The State of Illinois is one of the states where there has been erosion in academic and vocational prison programs (Erickson, 2011). At the same time that postsecondary correctional education programs are declining the Illinois prison population has grown; community colleges are poised to aid prison systems on a much larger scale, increasing the enrollment of postsecondary incarcerated students and subsequently contributing to the overall college completion agenda (The John Howard Association of Illinois, n.d.).

Concluding Thoughts
In the era of mass incarceration, the question of prison education as a public and private good is a timely one. From our standpoint, community colleges are positioned to play a vital role in fashioning pathways to postsecondary education and promising future. In closing, we hope this essay serves to provoke thought on the complex landscape of incarceration and the potential of community college research and practice to advance educational policy and social justice for a discounted population of learners.
Three Views on Concurrent Enrollment
by Kent Scheffel, Vice President of Enrollment Services at Lewis and Clark Community College

In this article, I would like to draw together three policy and practitioner vantage points on concurrent enrollment: national, state, and local. To do this I would like to take up questions of quality, program accreditation, and educational policy, among others, by changing hats throughout based on my roles in the National Alliance of Concurrent Enrollment Partnerships (NACEP), Lewis and Clark Community College, and Illinois Alliance of Concurrent Enrollment Partnerships (ILACEP). My hope is to provide a view of central concerns about concurrent enrollment from different vantage points. In some cases the three perspectives will align. But this isn’t always the case and I hope to highlight these as well.

NACEP: A National View

I would like to begin at the national level, and in particular NACEP accreditation of concurrent enrollment programs. NACEP began as a conversation among educators at the American Association of Higher Education conference, held at Syracuse University in 1997. Two year later, 20 founding institutions officially established the organization in order to help ensure the quality of college classes offered to high school students though concurrent enrollment partnerships.

NACEP has reached several milestones since its establishment in 1999. In 2002, NACEP adopted national standards for concurrent enrollment programs. Two years later in 2004 the first four programs successfully earned accreditation after documenting to a peer review team that their programs had implemented the standards. Interest in the accreditation process has grown over the past decade as institutions and states seek to raise the caliber and stature of their programs. As of the 2015–2016 school year, 97 concurrent enrollment programs are considered NACEP: A National View.

Kent Scheffel

Kent Scheffel offers a unique combination of expertise on dual credit, and more generally, concurrent enrollment. Kent is vice president of enrollment services at Lewis and Clark Community College, where he oversees one of the largest dual credit programs in Illinois. The program extends to eighteen high schools in his college district, and is currently the only National Alliance of Concurrent Enrollment Partnerships (NACEP) accredited program in the state. In addition, Kent is currently serving a two–year term as president of NACEP. Finally, in the past year Kent has taken an active role in establishing an Illinois state chapter of NACEP, also known as the Illinois Alliance of Concurrent Enrollment Partnerships.


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Concurrent enrollment courses also have the ability to respond to local, state, and regional needs in a distinctive manner, even beyond other accelerated high school learning. For example, if community leaders and elected officials in a metropolitan area begin an economic development initiative related to the technology industry, concurrent enrollment courses can be designed and offered to students to help them learn the technical skills and to ready them for a certificate or degree program to meet employment needs and opportunities. Concurrent enrollment courses are also readily adapted to new programs and fields at the four-year college level as well. For example, new transfer agreements are being developed to include new Restoration Ecology and Computer Networking courses.

Most colleges and universities are continually looking for new programs and strategies to prepare and enroll top students, and to see them through to certificate or degree attainment. Importantly, research by the National Student Clearinghouse shows that students who take concurrent enrollment courses are at least 10% more likely to complete a degree. In all, concurrent enrollment is an extremely cost effective program that can be a win for students, high schools, and colleges.

With that said, I want to change hats and speak from the college standpoint, accreditation allows us to promote our academic endeavor, securing and maintaining accreditation. The regional bodies recognize the value of national accreditation was the added and substantial dimension we needed to implement and maintain. Course evaluations were required, as well as surveys of counselors, teachers, principals, recent high school graduates, and graduates who were four years removed from high school. Site visits to the high schools by our college program coordinators were added as well. The site visits were implemented to ensure the course content and learning outcomes were aligned for on-campus and off-campus courses. Since college coordinators and high school faculty were initially hesitant about the visits. In some cases coordinators were reluctant to evaluate the high school teachers’ courses, and the teachers were unsure about the coordinators’ expectations.

Our evaluation process also requires ongoing professional development for faculty, and we initially thought some high school teachers may be reluctant to take part in the workshops. The response from the teachers quickly proved that we were incorrect. Teachers appreciated the opportunity to discuss changes and updates with their discipline and to share ideas with colleagues. Many high school teachers now look forward to the professional development sessions and respond with high marks on the session evaluations.

What we found is that NACEP accreditation provided the blueprint for course standards as well as program operation and management. It allowed us to feel confident that high school learning outcomes aligned with those on campus. And it ensured that the reputation of the dual credit program in the college and in our partner high schools. While many programs throughout the country operate at a high level and have desirable outcomes, a limited number have taken the steps to earn NACEP accreditation. In fact, currently, Lewis and Clark offers the only accredited program in Illinois. (From the NACEP standpoint, we hope to increase membership in the state.) From the college standpoint, accreditation allows us to promote the program, internally and externally, with added stature when people realize that it has been recognized through national accreditation. Accreditation is also beneficial in working with college or university regional accreditation. The regional bodies recognizing the value of NACEP accreditation, and the policies and practices it entails, and this only helps the college meet the expectations of regional bodies. But like any other worthwhile academic endeavor, securing and maintaining accreditation is not easy. Fortunately, our college administration and high school partners were supportive of the process and were committed to earning accreditation. But the phrase I would use is “time intensive.”

The application process entails a comprehensive peer review, an institutional self-study, and extensive planning in order to implement NACEP’s 17 national standards for program quality in the areas of curriculum, faculty credentials, student qualifications and assessments, and program evaluation (more on this in a moment). And, as other colleges might expect, the main challenge of the application process was producing the necessary documentary materials. The actual self-study of applicants’ programs in the same manner as regional accreditors. While a NACEP self-study is not on the same scale as one required for college-wide accreditation, we also had fewer staff and faculty to complete it, and the time and effort of those involved was considerable. On the one hand, we discovered that we were already adhering to NACEP standards for the most part. On the other hand, documenting adherence is a time consuming effort.

We faced a bigger hurdle once we received accreditation, because in a sense the process was just beginning. I highlighted the final element above — program evaluation — because this has been the real challenge: the ongoing assessment of ourselves. While Lewis and Clark was following most of NACEP’s standards, even before accreditation — due in part to rigorous but less comprehensive Illinois state standards — the evaluation regime was an added and substantial dimension we needed to implement and maintain. Course evaluations were required, as well as surveys of counselors, teachers, principals, recent high school graduates, and graduates who were four years removed from high school. Site visits to the high schools by our college program coordinators were added as well. The site visits were implemented to ensure the course content and learning outcomes were aligned for on-campus and off-campus courses. Some college coordinators and high school faculty were initially hesitant about the visits. In some cases coordinators were reluctant to evaluate the high school teachers’ courses, and the teachers were unsure about the coordinators’ expectations.

Our evaluation process also requires ongoing professional development for faculty, and we initially thought some high school teachers may be reluctant to take part in the workshops. The response from the teachers quickly proved that we were incorrect. Teachers appreciated the opportunity to discuss changes and updates with their discipline and to share ideas with colleagues. Many high school teachers now look forward to the professional development sessions and respond with high marks on the session evaluations.

Importantly, accreditation also serves as quality assurance for parents who are unfamiliar with concurrent enrollment or accelerated learning. The level of cooperation also extends to college and high school administrators. Both groups are aware of the challenges faced by the other and work together to produce multiple benefits. For example, high school administrators often confer with the college regarding teacher qualifications during the hiring process to ensure that she or he could offer a dual credit course. And the college regularly attends school board meetings in order to report on student data, credit hours earned, and tuition savings. Importantly, accreditation also serves as quality assurance for parents who are unfamiliar with concurrent enrollment or accelerated learning.

The biggest challenge, even frustration, in the evaluation process, which is much less controllable than high school and college enrollment, is student responsiveness. It is very difficult to achieve the desired evaluation response rates from students who are no longer in the dual credit program. Conducting course evaluations and surveying teachers, counselors and principals can be completed in an efficient manner. They are invested, motivated, and we know where they are. By contrast, former dual credit students, four years out, have often moved and are harder to stay in contact with, and in general have moved on with their lives. Understandably, they are not concerned with program evaluations or longitudinal studies. Even being able to contact them does not guarantee that they will answer. Yet this is an important part of understanding the impact of dual credit: college enrollment, persistence, certificate and degree attainment, and career paths. And, it is part of the accreditation evaluation regime. Student tracking is daunting in general, and unfortunately we are no exception to the rule. The irony is that we want them to venture out into the world, but not so far that we can’t follow their paths.

The good news is that we do have the ability to promote success for students in dual credit courses, and to know when they do succeed. For example, our college math department provides common exams for most sections.
of math offered on-campus and at high schools. The exams provide the math department with the assurance that high school students are graded on the same course content and performing in the same manner as their traditional college student counterparts. Our English dual credit goes one step further. The college coordinator actually gathers the same writing assignments from high school and college students, and they are blindly distributed among high school and college instructors to achieve consistency in grading. And quite often the high school students have better overall outcomes than on-campus students.

One final note from the Lewis and Clark standpoint. An ongoing challenge will be the retirement of many qualified instructors who are being replaced by teachers who do not have the necessary credentials to teach concurrent enrollment courses. Many school districts are seeking teachers with a bachelor’s degree and limited experience as a result of budget constraints. While the moves aid the districts in budgeting, a reduction in teachers with a master’s degree and academic credentials required by NACEP (and state) standards will result in fewer concurrent enrollment courses for students.

National Goals

Returning to the national level and looking ahead, NACEP has three overarching goals. First, we will enhance our membership services at all levels, in part through the creation of a new position, Director of Accreditation and Member Services. Our goal is partly a response to institutional member calls for additional publications and electronic resources, as well as the increased demand for services through the formation of state and regional chapters. We will also increase our connection with and support of high school district and state agency members, through new networking opportunities and the development of new resources. And overall, we hope to increase membership and accreditation, especially given the extensive national landscape of concurrent enrollment programs and the importance of quality and support.

Second, NACEP, through our Accreditation Commission, is embarking on our periodic review of standards. The accreditation standards were originally adopted in 2002, and revised in 2009. At our national conference in Denver, in October, preliminary information was gathered from attendees. Internal discussions regarding the standards are continuing, and the concerns of regional accrediting bodies and various state standards will be reviewed prior to adopting any changes.

Third, we are strengthening the role of NACEP, nationwide, as a central voice and organizer for concurrent enrollment policy and practice. For example, NACEP is currently working with members in over 20 states to organize state or regional meetings of concurrent enrollment professionals, conduct professional development workshops, and hold state conferences. We are enhancing the technical assistance we provide to statewide initiatives to develop and sustain high quality concurrent enrollment programs, and forming closer relationships with policy agencies and organizations such as state education commissions and ACT. And, NACEP continues to advance concurrent enrollment through its advocacy work. The annual Policy Seminar in Washington, D.C., proves very successful at increasing member knowledge of policies that impacts their work and building awareness among Washington policymakers about the value of concurrent enrollment.

A final aspect of NACEP that I will focus on is the growing trend of forming state and regional chapters. This also leads me to change hats a final time to speak from the standpoint of Illinois’ efforts in this area. State and regional collaboration is not new. States such as Utah and Minnesota have had collaborative networks of concurrent enrollment professionals that date back a decade or more. What is new is the formal establishment of chapters that work on the ground, at the regional, state, and local levels, and also have a direct position and role within NACEP.

Forming a State Chapter of NACEP

The first two NACEP chapters are the state chapter, Ohio Alliance of Dual Enrollment Partnerships, which was recognized by NACEP in 2014, and the regional chapter, the New England Alliance of Concurrent Enrollment Partnerships, which was recognized in 2015.

In addition, chapters are in various stages of development in eight states: Utah, Minnesota, Illinois, Michigan, Missouri, Wyoming, Kansas, and Arkansas.

Let me conclude by speaking to the Illinois effort, known as the Illinois Alliance of Concurrent Enrollment Partnerships (ILACP), which, as I noted, is still under development. While Illinois dual credit programs periodically connected at statewide conferences or at meetings convened by the Illinois Community College Board (ICCB), there has not been a regular forum for these programs to gather to share resources and best practices, or to work collaboratively on a statewide level. For example, dual credit standards and funding in Illinois fall under the administration of ICCB and the Illinois Higher Education Board. A state chapter will allow members to identify common concerns and to engage state agencies in a constructive and strategic way. Our hope is that the state chapter will also amplify the reach of NACEP and its services in areas such as professional development, especially to help high school teachers earn the required credentials to teach a dual credit course. This is one of the biggest challenges faced by Illinois and other states.

Our approach to forming a chapter has been by the numbers. We modeled our organizing process and bylaws on the Ohio and New England chapters. We formed work groups around developing by-laws, contacting potential members, developing a professional development workshop, and the election of officers. And, in September 2015, the by-laws were approved by an electronic vote and we elected our first officers. I am pleased to say that Dr. David Naze of Prairie State College, in Chicago Heights, is serving as the first chapter president. Our next step will be to determine our immediate and longer-term goals and objectives in areas such as professional development or member engagement with state policy questions.

I am excited about the future of ILACP, in part because of the collaborative relationships that it promises to foster. Like other volunteer organizations, it is the members who will realize the success and sustainability of the chapter. There are many people, administrators, coordinators, and faculty, who are committed to the ongoing growth and development of concurrent enrollment. Their belief in its value and their passion for students will be vital to the chapter’s long-term success.

Please feel free to contact me with questions or thoughts about any aspect of concurrent enrollment, national, state, and district. Referencing the “OCURL Newsletter” will help me to make an immediate connection!

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New Research on Applied Baccalaureate Degrees: Implementation in Five Regions of the United States

by Debra D. Bragg, OCCRL founding director
Maria Claudia Soler Salazar, OCCRL Graduate Research Assistant

The Office of Community College Research and Leadership (OCCRL) was the recipient of a $1.2 million research grant from the National Science Foundation (NSF) Advanced Technology Education (ATE) program. From August 2010 to October 2015, a team of researchers at OCCRL conducted studies on the implementation and evaluation of Applied Baccalaureate (AB) degree programs in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) fields of study across the country.

Early work on this project included document review, website analysis, and online and telephone surveys of NSF ATE center and project grantees, to learn about their integration of AB degree programs at the community college and university levels. This initial research, led by Dr. Julia Panke Makela of the University of Illinois Career Center, produced a report titled, Investigating Applied Baccalaureate Degree Pathways in Technical Education.

Building on these findings, OCCRL launched case study research that delved into AB degree program implementation, with the goal of providing in-depth information on program quality, significance, and effectiveness, in order to help inform future endeavors. This newest research brings together a collection of case studies conducted in five regions of the United States. Typically involving partnerships of higher education institutions and employers, each case describes the goals, roles, and activities of critical stakeholders in implementing AB degree programs. Titled, Applied Baccalaureate Degrees in STEM and Technical Education: Program Implementation in Five Regions of the United States, the report offers a total of 11 institutional case studies that are organized into five meta-cases involving community colleges, universities, and their employer partners. These cases describe the associate’s of applied science (AAS) and applied baccalaureate (AB) degrees that are conferred in numerous STEM and technician education fields of study. The five cases are listed below.

Five Regional Cases

North Dakota
Bismarck State College’s Bachelors of Applied Science (BAS) in Energy Management

Maryland and Delaware
CyberWatch Center and Partners’ AB degrees associated with CyberWatch Center: NSF–ATE Center; Prince George’s Community College’s Associate of Applied Science (AAS) in Information Security; University of Maryland–University College’s Bachelor of Science (BS) in Cybersecurity; and Wilmington University’s Bachelor of Science (BS) in Computer and Network Security.

Florida
Daytona State College’s Bachelors of Science (BS) in Engineering Technology.

Ohio
Lakeland Community College, in Lake County, Ohio, and Partners’ AB degrees associated with Lakeland Community College’s Associate of Applied Science (AAS) in Biotechnology Science; and, in Cleveland, Ursuline College’s Bachelors of Arts (BA) in Biotechnology.

Oklahoma
Oklahoma State University Institute of Technology and Partners’ AB degrees associated with Oklahoma State University Institute of Technology’s Bachelor’s of Technology (BT) in Information Technology, Associate of Science (AS), and Associate of Applied Science (AAS) in Information Technology; Rose State College’s Associate of Applied Science (AAS) in Networking and Cyber Security; and Tulsa Community College’s Associate of Applied Science (AAS) in Information Technology.

The AB degree programs that are profiled in this report reside in Florida, Ohio, Oklahoma, South Dakota, and the 2-state region of Maryland and Delaware. These programs emphasize various areas of STEM and technician education, including biotechnology and biotechnology sciences; energy management; engineering technology; information technology; and, cybersecurity. Each case analyzes program implementation from the perspective of institutional context, program goals, key components (curriculum and instruction, support services, etc.), and intended outcomes.

This phase of the research on AB degree programs in STEM and technician education used case study methodology, supplemented with participatory action research. The research design was similar to one used in Department of Education-funded research that the OCCRL project called Sharing What Works: Exemplary and Promising Career and Technical Education Programs (Bragg, Bobik, Maxwell, & Palovik, 2002). This multi-year project for the Office of Career—Technical and Adult Education entailed the development of criteria and an evidence–based process for identifying and recognizing exemplary and promising programs, including postsecondary technical education programs. An extensive literature review and practitioner–expert input were used to identify four categories of criteria for promising and exemplary technical education programs of study.

Four Categories of Criteria for Promising and Exemplary Technical Education Programs of Study

- Program Quality
  - Demonstrates clear goals, evidence–based, reflective of high expectations, and supportive of career pathways.

- Educational Significance
  - Uses state–of–the–art technology, innovative instructional methods, work–based learning, and culturally inclusive curriculum.

- Evidence of Effectiveness
  - Demonstrates student academic achievement and outcomes consistent with industry, state, and national standards.

- Replicability
  - Uses program and partnership designs that are feasible to implement by other institutions, partnerships, and employers.

In the original Sharing What Works project and in this study, practitioner–experts identified AB degree programs that would provide optimal insights into AB degree implementation, optimal sites for participatory field research. Thus, from the outset of this study, University of Illinois researchers worked alongside technical experts drawn from NSF–ATE projects and centers and from the advisory committee, which fostered active dialogue among site personnel and researchers and contributed to a deeper understanding the current state and the potential of AB degrees.

Results of this report, along with other papers generated by the NSF–ATE research are available on the OCCRL website. Results of this project are intended to assist postsecondary institutions to implement, enhance, and evaluate AB degree programs. Because college credentials, from certificates to degrees, have growing importance in the United States, knowing how to implement high quality AB degree programs, including knowing when these programs are are and are not needed, is important. Partnerships between community college and four–year institutions that involve the articulation of applied associate coursework into AB degrees represents a promising expansion of college access and completion in STEM education, including technician education, but only if these degrees prove to be beneficial to student employers.

Individuals interested in learning more about AB degrees should also consider attending the Community College Baccalaureate Association’s (CCBA) 16th Annual International Conference in Chicago, March 18–20, 2016. A central feature of this year’s conference is the Applied Baccalaureate (AB) Design Lab where participants can attend dedicated sessions that extend from an introduction to AB degree programs, to implementation, to stakeholder analysis, to policy and accreditation, to evaluation and continuous improvement.

References

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Reverse Transfer: Taking Stock and Moving Forward

by Jason L. Taylor, Assistant Professor Department of Educational Leadership and Policy, University of Utah
Matt Giani, Research Scientist, Office of Strategy and Policy, University of Texas at Austin

Reverse transfer (or reverse credit transfer) is an emerging policy in higher education. Reverse transfer programs are intended for students who transfer from a community college to a university without earning an associate’s degree. College credits earned at the university are then transferred back to the community college where a degree audit is conducted and students are awarded an associate degree’s if all degree requirements are met. Our research published in early 2015 found that all states, except Alaska, either have a statewide reverse transfer policy or at least one institutional program (Garcia, 2015). We also found that the majority of states with reverse transfer legislation enacted those policies within the past five years (Garcia, 2015). In short, reverse transfer policies are expanding and they will likely continue to proliferate as states and institutions around the country develop new reverse transfer agreements and partnerships. This momentum points to the need and opportunity to take stock of what we are learning about reverse transfer and to consider directions for moving forward. What follows is a summary of select findings from OCCRL’s research on reverse transfer programs in the 15 states funded through Credit When It’s Due (CWID).

Many reverse transfer–eligible transfer students do not complete a bachelor’s degree within four years of transfer

A central problem driving the development of reverse transfer policies is that many community college transfer students who transfer an associate’s degree do not complete their bachelor’s degree. Researchers have documented this phenomenon (Shapiro et al., 2013), and we observed this problem in the CWID states as well. Using a cohort of first–time transfer students in fall 2008, we estimated which students were potentially eligible for reverse transfer and observed their college enrollment and degree completion outcomes four years after transfer. As displayed in Figure 1, the results showed that 48% of students who were potentially eligible for reverse transfer associate’s degrees did not earn a bachelor’s degree within four years of transfer (Taylor, Bishop, Makela, Bragg, & Ruud, 2013). Many of these students had accumulated large numbers of credits, yet they had no degree to show for their efforts.

Reverse transfer policies and practices are evolving and there are many opportunities to optimize and scale reverse transfer in states

The CWID initiative provided states the opportunity to develop and experiment with reverse transfer, including the planning and development needed to bring reverse transfer to scale. In a paper released in early 2015, we described and defined five dimensions of reverse transfer practice and processes; Figure 2 displays and defines these five dimensions (Taylor & Giani, 2015). For each dimension we described ways in which states and institutions were optimizing reverse transfer to expand the number of students that may benefit without reducing the quality or integrity of the associate’s degree. For example, a state might scale reverse transfer by integrating the student consent process into existing transfer admission applications or by investing in technology to automate transcript exchange and degree audit functions. Although simple in theory, these policies require investment of time and resources that should not be overlooked.

Initial evidence on the impact of reverse transfer is mostly positive, but also suggests that reverse transfer may influence students differently

Because reverse transfer is a recent policy development, and one that requires adequate time to observe transfer students’ 4–year retention and degree attainment, we are just beginning to learn the policy outcomes. For example, in a recent study using data from Hawaii and Minnesota, which was presented at the 2015 Association for the Study of Higher Education conference in Denver (Taylor & Giani, 2015), our analyses showed that students who received the reverse transfer associate’s degree were more likely to earn a bachelor’s degree within one year of receiving the degree, when compared to other transfer students (see Figure 3). However, in the same paper there was evidence that some reverse transfer associate’s degree recipients (~10%) stopped–out of the university within one year. These results suggest that receiving the reverse transfer degree may influence students differently. These results should be interpreted with caution because more research is needed and more time is needed to monitor reverse transfer recipients’ progress toward the baccalaureate degree.
Reverse transfer has the potential to increase states’ associate’s degree attainment numbers

In general, reverse transfer has the potential to increase states’ associate’s degree attainment numbers, but we know little about the extent of these increases. Many states are still developing and refining their reverse transfer policies and practices in order to maximize the number of associate’s degrees awarded through reverse transfer, but our research suggests that reverse transfer has the potential to help states meet their degree attainment goals (Taylor & Bragg, 2015). Figure 4 displays the number of degrees each state conferred in the 2013–2014 and 2014–2015 academic years. Importantly, the associate’s degrees conferred through reverse transfer represent as much as a 17% increase in Hawaii’s annual number of degrees conferred, but most states we studied increased their associate’s degrees. We anticipate these figures will continue to grow as states refine their reverse transfer policies and practices and scale reverse transfer within and between states.

Moving forward with reverse transfer

Existing evidence and practices from the CWID states suggest several ways for states and institutions to proceed with reverse transfer. First, there is tentative evidence that reverse transfer can have a positive effect on the bachelor’s degree attainment rates of transfer students, although additional research is needed to expand the evidence base. This preliminary evidence is critical because it shows that reverse transfer can have a positive influence on transfer students’ bachelor’s degree attainment. Second, although some states have scaled reverse transfer and demonstrated the potential of reverse transfer to make an important contribution to states’ degree attainment goals, there remains great, untapped potential for the expansion and refinement of reverse transfer programs. Third, a number of strategies have emerged as promising practices for the optimization of reverse transfer, including:

- The integration of consent for reverse transfer transcript exchange and degree conferral into existing applications for enrollment and/or transfer
- The investment in and integration of technology that can automate electronic transcript exchange and the degree audit process
- The incorporation of targeted advising to help students understand the benefits of the associate’s degree, how to become eligible for reverse transfer, and what courses to take in order to receive the associate’s degree

This article only summarizes what we have learned about reverse transfer, and more research and publications are available on the CWID website.

References


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