

U On Research and Leadership P D A T E

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Research That Matters to the Community College: An Interview with John Levin

by Catherine Kirby

Dr. John Levin is the Joseph E. Moore Professor of Higher Education at North Carolina State University. He is a highly respected researcher and author of two books and numerous journal articles pertaining to the community college. His most recent book, *Community College Faculty: At Work in the New Economy* was published by Palgrave Macmillan in February 2006.

UPDATE: The first two decades of your involvement with community colleges were as an English instructor, and in various administrative roles. Please describe how your comprehensive background working within the community college system informed your ability and interests as a researcher and professor in higher education with a focus on the community college.

Dr. Levin: I worked in community colleges, beginning in the 1970s and currently use some of those initial experiences as if they happened yesterday in a way I refer to as a “telescoping phenomenon.” There are three foundational parts. First, I was a faculty member in a community college that was just opening its doors; we were a group of about 50 faculty who established curriculum and policies for the institution. We had a very small administrative structure which formed in my head what was possible with a small bureaucracy. Our department chairs were elected; they were faculty. That initial experience and the following 11 years, when I continued to be a faculty member teaching English literature, influenced me greatly. Also, my experiences working with students, particularly students who did not do well in high school or were older, returning students in their 30s or 40s, influenced how I view the community college and formed a kind of bedrock of both the types of students that inhabit community colleges and the faculty that are there.

The second phase began when that institution became too large and split into two institutions. I started at the new institution as a Director, an administrative position responsible for Arts and Sciences. Again, without much policy and procedure we began again to manage an institution. However, we had a new president and a more sophisticated administrative structure. That was influential because it taught me about some problems with power and authority. During this phase of administrative experience, I also became the supervisor of 50 full time faculty and about 60-100 part time faculty for a period of about 10 years; many of those people had been my colleagues previously.

Editor’s Note: This issue of UPDATE focuses on research that matters to community college administrators and faculty. Articles in this edition appeal to a broad audience of community college professionals, and we encourage you to share this issue with your colleagues across campus.

This issue and back issues of UPDATE can be found on the web at:
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The third phase was when I moved to another institution, which was not new but was a distance education institution trying to become more traditional and trying to become unionized. I became head of the campus and gained experience building the college's first permanent building. I participated as a manager in the first negotiations as well as helped write the first collective agreement. That was influential to the extent that I had a good relationship with faculty, and I also advised faculty on the language that was appropriate for the collective agreement.

When I started to become a researcher seriously in the end of 1980s and early 1990s, and then as a full-time researcher in 1993, those experiences sat on my shoulder—as well as the people, several of whom I still keep in contact with. I still occasionally ask them to show up at places where I am speaking to make sure I am being honest about my views of colleges.

UPDATE: Beginning in 1996, while you were at the Center for the Study of Higher Education at the University of Arizona and director of the Community College Institute, you conducted a long-term investigation studying organizational change, leadership, and management behaviors within Canadian and American community colleges. Could you recount some of your findings in that study that have added to the literature on governance in community colleges?

Dr. Levin: I define, view, and have experienced governance very broadly. It has to do with both the values of the institution—how people believe they are acting and under what kinds of authority, moral, and educational structures—as well as what we usually think of as traditional forms of governance, that is, decision-making. What I noticed in my research over the period of 1996-2001 (and beyond) were the severe pressures upon the institution from the outside. Traditionally, I've alluded to the fact that the study of higher education governance is normally seen as rather static. That is, it's an internal phenomenon of decision-making, where decision-making comes from the state level (or policy official level) and is enacted at the institution. But what I saw were severe pressures from what I call the "globalization phenomenon," which included the state's increasing role in the affairs of the institution to both view the institution as a vehicle of public policy as well as to steer the institution toward more efficient, productive practices, as well as to become an instrument of the state in workforce development. That was not totally new in the late 1980s because it was there in the 1970s as well. But it was increased in emphasis and increased in the coerciveness of government (state and federal).

There was also a movement of government away from financing the institution at a level that institutions had been accustomed to. Thus, while community colleges grew in enrollment numbers, considerably since the late 1980s, state government funding did not keep up. In that sense, we talk about the role of the state as well as their resource allocations that provide pressure on the institution. The institution, in order to respond through various strategies, tries to become more efficient and effective. That efficiency leads to, on the one hand, greater productivity. Because the major costs of the institution are labor costs, it

means hiring part time faculty instead of full time faculty to deal with increasing population growth. Nationally, today, we have 67% of the faculty employees at community colleges classified as part time. Part-timers sometimes do not have offices or e-mail accounts. Forty percent of them often have other full time jobs and other responsibilities; they are not fully vested in the institution. What that means is that added pressure is put on full time faculty for committee workload. It's also a pressure on the students, because they often have trouble finding part time faculty who often don't have offices on campus.

Another example would be during the late 1980s—beginning 1990s: institutions became much more entrepreneurial in seeking new resources, whether it was through contract training with the private sector or finding donors, that is, corporate sponsors such as banks that would put logos on campus or when Coke or Pepsi advertised in the restrooms, which would bring in money. Another pressure is from advanced technology and electronic communications, which is beyond the control of the institution. Many scholars, such as Manuel Castells, have talked about the change of structure of society, which changes work structures, and the change of pace of society because of communications technology. Another example includes the rapid decision processes that occur in community colleges through the use of electronic technology: e-mail and things that speed up the entire process—so much so that instead of in the 1970s where a decision may have taken two weeks to be realized, it may take two hours today because of this technology.

The last area is culture and particularly has to do with student demographics because of immigration to the United States and Canada. I mention Canada because it's a destination for Asian immigrants. Historically, until the 1970s and 1980s, immigrants to North America were largely European. That flow stopped or was subdued; the flow is now from Asia and Eastern Europe, since the demise of the Soviet Union, and from war torn countries (the Balkans) as well as (particularly for the U.S.) from Mexico. Those are the big traffic zones. These immigrants have changed the nature of communities and societies in North America and thus, have changed community colleges particularly with the influx of English as a second language students. And starting in the 1970s, and continuing to reach a higher and higher level, are what we refer to as remedial basic education and adult high school completion students, which number in the millions in community colleges. They add pressure to the institution to change curriculum and to change teaching approaches.

This is not a new phenomenon. In 1979, Suanne Roueche and Nora Comstock at the University of Texas had a federal grant to study literacy, and Dick Richardson and his colleagues at Arizona State University had a similar grant. The Roueche/Comstock study never made it to publication, probably because it was too controversial, but the Richardson study did; it's called *Literacy and the Open Access College* (1983). It was at that time Richardson defined this new population of students coming into community colleges as "non-traditional" or in need of remediation. That underprepared population had a tremendous effect on what he called "biting," that is, taking little chunks out

of text and giving it to students to learn as opposed to the whole text. Some would call it “dumbing down” the curriculum, but I would say, to some extent, it was trying to meet the needs of students. This seemed to be a kind of harbinger of things to come. By 1991, McGrath and Spear, who worked at the Community College of Philadelphia, critiqued this change at the community college and hearkened back to a day that never was: a day when most of our students at the community college were philosophy, history, political science, and English students and they could be taught at a university level [*The Academic Crisis of the Community College*, 1991]. They referred to this as the period of the “disarticulation of the curriculum.” What they meant was that there was no coherence—nobody taught “the canon” anymore; instead, they were learning how to write memos or paragraphs, as opposed to discussing Plato or Shakespeare.

All of these large, external changes having influence on the institution lead to social change in the interaction between faculty and administration, which in turn lead to different sets of relationships between the institution and its constituents, and thus to different kinds of relationships and structures between faculty and students. We can see coming out of this, certainly, distance education or on-line learning. We also see more unionized faculty and management antagonism over resources and job security, particularly benefits. We can see coming out of this the role and the rise of the part time faculty with its associations and its attempt to change work to be more dignified. All of these, because they come from similar sources outside the institution, tend to lead to isomorphic changes, that is, changes that make community colleges look similar to each other and approach problems in a similar way. But actually, community colleges are quite different from each other.

Among practitioners the concept of best practices is what people look for in order to deal with these external pressures, whether it’s part time faculty, or distance education, or shrinking resources. They talk to each other and institutions start to behave more alike: partially because they are coerced by government to be more efficient and partially because they are copying more successful, sometimes high status, community colleges. All of that means governance is more focused these days on issues of competitive survival, on issues of resources, and issues of changing student populations. I doubt that too many people sit around and talk about underlying assumptions of the value of education; I don’t mean that’s been lost, but it and other things have given way to more pressing economic concerns.

UPDATE: With the impending dearth of leaders formally prepared to assume the top administrative positions in American community colleges, many are ramping up their efforts to “grow their own,” providing leadership development opportunities to faculty who are expected to assume increasing responsibility in shared decision-making as faculty members, committee and senate leaders or in administrative roles as department chairs, deans, and other formally recognized leadership positions. Based on your research, what potential impact does this have on institutional decision-making?

Dr. Levin: I have one view split into three parts. I think that understanding an institution, its culture and how things work, is important. But also, too much of the same—that is, administrators at one college educating other administrators or faculty at the same college in order to become leaders—leads to a kind of reproduction syndrome. It’s a problem of homogenization or “group think.” In order to combat it, the institution needs to have ideas from the outside, a kind of immigration pattern. The problem is that faculty are not a very mobile group; they tend to stay in their own institution for most, or all, of their lives. This means that if change and new ideas are to come about, a college needs to bring in new administrators from external places, outside the state and from other systems.

The other part is that there’s this notion of a crisis of leadership in community colleges. Maybe I haven’t seen the data clearly enough, but it seems to me that leaders have been coming and going for years. The graying of the administration is also a graying of the faculty, and remember there are many more faculty. When we talk about turn over of large populations, we are talking on a relative scale. So, we have to replace 500 presidents in the next 2-3 years. I don’t see that as a serious problem, but the view that the replacements are going to come from an older faculty is probably problematic. People have not thought that out.

The other point I want to make is that while I understand these programs for leaders need to be hands-on, real world experiences, sometimes they are too much “a-theoretical.” That is, there is little to no basic theory that underlie this training. I like to stress the importance of academic education in any kind of leadership development opportunity for faculty or administrators who are going to become leaders. Obviously, the ideal is to take courses at a higher education program at a university, but you can still have professional development programs that are not university based but have a component of academic education. “There’s nothing more practical than a good theory,” said a theorist [Kurt Lewin] because theory comes out of empirical investigations that can support the theory to say that the theory has applicability. Whereas, best practices or anecdotal bases for preparation of people might work for an individual case, but they cannot necessarily be generalized or may not work in other places. Having some theoretical background or understanding of organizational theory (for example, understanding power and influence from a theoretical perspective) and having some understanding of the histories of community colleges and of higher education are also valuable.

UPDATE: Technology-based instruction and distributed learning has altered the culture of the community college and its faculty. What have you observed about this cultural change that faculty and administrators should keep in mind as we continue to promote and rely on this form of delivery?

Dr. Levin: We have written a book called *Community College Faculty: At Work in the New Economy* (Palgrave, 2006) in which we cover various aspects of post-industrial society that have influenced or relate to the work of faculty. One of those is certainly technology-based instruction and distributed learning. The

underlying assumption of that chapter is that technology and the use of technology in instruction essentially structures both instruction and the work of faculty. That is, how faculty work—what they do, how their day is organized, and what curriculum they choose—is heavily shaped by the use of technology.

Second, the same technology structures social relationships. An extreme example is where an instructor is at the computer night and day, communicating with students but never seeing the students face-to-face. The kind of relationship, on a social basis, that instructor develops with students is shaped, and one might say ‘controlled,’ by the technology. I’m not saying that’s bad or wrong, it’s just different. We also know that we don’t yet know how information is communicated in an on-line course and how it’s taken and understood by the person on the other end. It’s becoming clear to me that there’s a difference between various demographic populations and their use of technology. For example, the variable of age probably has an effect on the use of technology, the meaning one takes from it, and the relationship one develops. I think that socio-economic background has an impact, as well as age, on how you develop social relationships. One’s cultural capital (knowledge, family background, or ability to speak the language) takes on a certain role in a face-to-face encounter and another role in the online environment. That’s the cultural shift I see happening.

I notice when I evaluate or talk to faculty who are using on-line instruction, or when I talk to graduate students [enrolled in online courses], the preference is for face-to-face—for connection. The choice of on-line is convenience: [I hear] “I can’t make the class.” “I can’t drive all the way to the campus.” “I’ve got children; can I do it some other way?” That’s perfectly understandable to me. But what’s not understandable is when that same phenomenon occurs when people are on campus, when people could meet, when people are not subjected to responsibilities that keep them away from campus.

The last thing I would say about technology-based instruction is the principal reason (although it’s touted as access) in all of higher ed for the use of on-line education is cost. We speculate in our book there will be no reduced cost with on-line education compared to face-to-face, but there will be more work for faculty.

UPDATE: You have described that the predominant expression of faculty values is at odds with the economic behaviors of the institution. Explain the outcomes of this tension on faculty and the institution in general.

Dr. Levin: I look at faculty and administrators in their professional identity or professional views (as opposed to their personal views). What I’ve seen in my research in talking to faculty in seven different institutions in one study as well as large number of administrators is that while everybody has good intentions, they are structured to some extent by their roles; administrators take on the role of manager, and faculty take on the role of educator. That doesn’t mean that administrators aren’t educators, too, or that faculty aren’t managers as well, but their predominant roles are quite different. This relates to your first question and my comment about my experiences both as a manager

and as a faculty member. The community of interest is not shared among faculty and administrators; the essential function of the administrator is different from the essential function of the faculty member. They express different values and perceive the world from their perspectives somewhat differently. What I note in my research is that administrators, largely, have an economic, neo-liberal philosophy. There’s an important role for the institution in the economy—that the function, largely, of the community college is to produce the workforce or produce individuals who are prepared to go out and work and do so in an economically efficient manner—and to get the most out of their institutions with the dollars they’ve been given.

The faculty’s fundamental focus is on the students they teach, not so much the [students’] long-term goals becoming workers, but more within the instructional environment where [faculty] are trying to teach them concepts, skills, techniques, and ideas. To that extent, [faculty and administrators] live in separate worlds. Norton Grubb, in his book, *Honored But Invisible*, where he looks at teaching, sees the same phenomenon of the separate worlds. Where I differ from Grubb is that he sees administrators as aloof from faculty—maybe he means just the teaching part. I see [administrators] as enmeshed with faculty: almost too involved with faculty in the work of faculty. What I have seen is that faculty are compromised, because although they have different views and values than administrators, they do also serve as vehicles for this neo-liberal state (for the ends that administrators want). They may have a class size of 25 or 30 and the institution can’t hire another faculty member or there’s more demand for a class, and they’ll take on more students. This is particularly obvious in the social sciences, humanities, or sciences where you have 40 students in a lab with one faculty member, which is, if not illegal, at least highly dangerous—which I observed in my study.

The faculty are also obliged to become more entrepreneurial—out raising money or involved in contract training or even recruiting students. Students are dollars. This is how the state funds most institutions, based on full-time equivalency: the more students you have, the more funding you get. Also, by teaching the courses and the programs they do, the faculty become vehicles of the political economy. They’re training for business and industry even though they may think they are fundamentally just teaching students ideas.

Faculty have jumped on the train called the ‘learning college.’ That particular concept is somewhat distasteful to me because a component of the movement seems to imply the use of technology for technology’s sake, another kind of efficiency (low cost for student learning) model. Faculty have moved on that train; some of them because they like technology, but mostly because the ideology of the institution is in that direction, and to some extent, administrators are compelled to say, “Let’s do this faster, more efficiently, and technology is the way.” As my former colleagues at the University of Arizona [Sheila Slaughter and Gary Rhoades] talk about in their books on higher education (referring mostly to universities) is that the instructional environment, and the students in it, become the site where the technology (hardware and software) is experimented. Also they argue that we’re

teaching our students in colleges to become good consumers, to go out and buy and to use the electronic technology. So I'd call it a vicious, not a virtuous, circle.

In my research I found that technology leads to more work for everybody, both administrators and faculty. I don't know about students; I haven't studied them from this perspective, although my current study of students indicates that there are stratified populations in the use of technology. You'll have students who are middle/upper middle class in the sciences and nursing and they're using technology. You'll find students in adult basic education or some with lower socio-economic status and they have no understanding of technology at all. The point about technology at work is that administrators work 6 ½ days a week, and much of that is facilitated by technology. They're on their cell phones, their computers, on-line, both inside and outside their office. There is no distinction between personal life, social life, and professional life. And some faculty I have talked to have a life that's comprised of work, work, and work that is facilitated by computers, and electronic mail is probably the most endemic disease we have.

UPDATE: Given that technology is not going to go away, nor is the economic pressure on community colleges going to lessen, do you have any thoughts about: Within this new world, what can we do to preserve the kind of academic discourse or preserve faculty values—supporting faculty who've gone into a profession to help, to teach?

Dr. Levin: We try to raise the question in our new book. I don't think that there is a simple answer but there are a variety of perspectives that come with the question, and they go back to the issue of governance. One has to do with faculty asserting themselves and their role as integral—as the core of the institution, first and foremost, not simply a labor force. This means they have to establish a pronounced professional identity for themselves, which is difficult. It could include strengthening professional identity in the sense that faculty belong to an association or increasing their discipline affiliations and feel they're autonomous in their work. Years ago, George Vaughan and Jim Palmer wrote about the importance of faculty engaged in research toward scholarship. That is another option for faculty: to do some writing in their field.

They also need to have voice and start to challenge some of the untested assumptions about the new economy, and what I call the “*Nouveau* College” (the importance of the use of technology, and the use of training as opposed to educating). Moreover, one needs to take a sober look at what has changed because of all of the new solutions for the community college: whether it's greater efficiency, whether it's the concepts of learning college; whether it's the use of technology. What has changed? Have students become smarter? Are the transfer rates going up from college to university? The answers to all those questions are more or less “No.” Nothing much as changed as far as student education. The problem with the new economy or *Nouveau* College is that we have difficulty with making discrimination between what's important what's not important—between making decisions on “Is this something we have to act

on now, or is this something we can leave? Is this something we can put to a committee or is this something that takes executive decision? Is dealing with an incident with a student with a disability important, or is attending the ribbon cutting ceremony of yet another building more important?” Sometimes administrators and faculty are faced with these choices and it's difficult to understand what's the priority. The priorities have to be set within an institution on the values of that institution. When an institution's mission states it wants to become a leader in serving business and industry's needs, it tells me where their priorities are. If an institution articulates that its priority is the community it serves or is the relationships established within the institution, that tells me something else. Institutions need to think about that. They need to think about why they exist, their purpose, and they have to think about themselves within a larger socio-economic context.

Maybe you've been at a community college, like my colleagues here in North Carolina, for 25-30 years and you've been doing workforce training. Who is educating the basic education students? Well, the community college is, but is it a priority? Does the government fund them in the way they should? No, they fund them with 2/3 worth of a regular student. We have to think about the value of education. There is a kind of contradiction here. The futurists talk to us about the importance of training for the workforce. At the same time, they talk about the fact that people under 25 change jobs once a year and that people over 25 change jobs every 3 years. Does that mean that we're going to train them for new skills every year? Does that mean that people are going to go back to college every 3 years? I don't think that's going to happen; people don't have the time. What is it then that we want people to learn [while they are in our community colleges]? Can an educated person who can think, read, write, spell, and do math be adjustable or adaptable? I think so, probably more likely than somebody who has a highly specialized training focus.

Finally, faculty need to think more internationally, not as economic competitors but in cooperation. For example, how can we bring some of the best talents in the world to United States and send Americans of talent to other countries? Our recent immigration practices seem to keep out people who are very talented when, in fact, the country's greatness often comes from immigrants. I've yet to find anyone with serious knowledge of the empirical data to state that the United States in the next 20 years is going to train and educate all the creative people, engineers, and scientists. More serious scholarship is therefore useful for community college practitioners so that they do not adopt popular notions without question and critique. In this way college leadership is important, not so much in managing the institution so that it is controlled but rather that its goals, decisions, and actions are based upon scholarly knowledge, theory, and values that stem from the historical bases of both practice and institutional mission. ♦

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Increased Needs for Community College Research in a “No Frills” World

by Linda Serra Hagedorn

The nation has entered a “no frills” era where budget cuts, re-trenchment, and cutbacks have become commonplace and expected. Giants such as K-Mart and United Airlines found themselves in such great financial difficulty that declaring chapter 11 status loomed as the only option.

“No frills” has cut many services that were previously commonplace. We no longer expect service at the service station, food on airlines, or a human voice on the end of a business telephone call. Retailers such as Wal-Mart and Home Depot have installed self-service check out lanes where customers scan and bag their purchases without need of a sales representative. Cutbacks, cutoffs, and lay-offs are everywhere. Unfortunately education is not immune to the budget slash and curtailment frenzy. In many elementary schools art, music and physical education have either been curtailed or totally eliminated in an effort to supply only the basics. High schools have seen cuts in after school activities and intramural sports. At the college level, administrators are discontinuing courses and programs that do not “pay for themselves.”

Newton’s Third Law of Motion states that for every action there is an equal and opposite reaction. And, in recent years we have witnessed the reactions and backlash to the “no frills” frenzy, some being very surprising and unpredictable. For example, during the 1990s when automobile manufacturers were on a quest to design smaller and more economical cars, the public backlash was a demand for large SUVs. In a response to a heightened awareness of health issues, Americans suddenly became willing to pay for “designer water” even though tap water was perfectly potable. Finally, in response to traditional postsecondary institutions’ indifference toward working adults, many adult students resorted to for-profit postsecondary alternatives such as the University of Phoenix that could provide online curricula and programs that accommodated busy schedules. All of these reactions were unexpected in that SUVs, designer water, and for-profit education are not economical alternatives but rather higher-priced options.

So how does the “no frills” frenzy relate to community college research? The answer is simply that government, foundations, and even the general public have perceived postsecondary research as a frill rather than a pre-investment strategy directing future dollars to be wisely invested. Indeed, much of the higher education research funding has been cut or eliminated. While the U.S. Department of Education supports “No Child Left Behind,” policymakers have apparently forgotten that children become adults, many of whom have been left far behind, as indicated by unemployment figures and the increasing need for remediation at

the postsecondary level. Foundations are less apt to respond to proposals at the postsecondary level assuming that their dollars accrue a higher return when invested in children. Casting all college students as privileged remains an obstinate belief in a country where only a little over a quarter of persons over age 25 have a bachelor’s degree or higher (National Center for Education Statistics, 2004). Perhaps it is a reasonable for some to believe that spending money on those that appear to be on the path of achievement is less worthy than investing dollars in young children hoping that they will someday be so fortunate as to be on the college-degree path. Yet research shows that this line of thinking belies the truth. While about 65 percent of high school graduates enter college within one year of graduation, about a third will drop-out within the first year and yet another third will exit prior to graduation (National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education, 2004; National Center for Education Statistics, 2004). Furthermore, we know that of those low-income students who go to college, the majority will begin at a community college and that the vast majority will not earn an associate’s degree, transfer, or ever earn a bachelor’s degree. Research is needed to better meet the needs of these students so that these rather dismal statistics can improve.

In this essay, I point out four areas where community colleges are clearly heading during our “no frills” quest and the dangers of the path without benefit of research, planning, and foreknowledge. I contend that community college research is more important and necessary today than ever before. Community colleges are venturing into new territory and are being increasingly tapped to serve a myriad of community needs. In this way “no frills” has metamorphosed into action without investigation. Continuing on this path while not pursuing concurrent research is akin to diving into a pool before verifying if it is full of water, if the water is free of disease, or if it is full of sharks.

Remediation

While it is true that more Americans are enrolling in college, the proportion requiring remedial, developmental, or compensatory education is increasing at an even faster pace (Education Trust, 1999). Today more than half of *all* college students take at least one remedial or compensatory course (Adelman, 1999) and that proportion balloons to almost 80 percent when only considering minority students specifically at community colleges (Nora, Barlow, & Crisp, 2005). Unfortunately, only a trickle of low-income students emerges from remedial work into college level work (Hagedorn et al, 1999; Hagedorn, 2004; Nora, Rendon, & Cuadraz, 1999).

We are witnessing a growing trend among four-year universities to relegate those students requiring remediation to community colleges. Research is sorely needed to identify the appropriate teaching methods that will assist these students to be successful. At this point most colleges continue to supply remedial education in the same manner as the original presentation in high school. The assumption is that if students didn't learn the material the first time, repetition will do the trick. Unfortunately, the statistics indicate that this approach is not working and research is desperately required. Further, as more and more students in community colleges are enrolled in remedial and compensatory courses we ignore the effect on high achieving students. Moreover, we do not understand how these changing demographics will affect faculty morale, faculty hiring, and faculty status.

Nursing and Allied Health Professions

There is a growing trend to discontinue undergraduate nursing programs from four-year institutions and to relegate them to community colleges. The University of Southern California, Case Western Reserve, and others have shifted their missions and emphases to include only graduate nursing programs. Syracuse University just announced that it will close its School of Nursing in June of 2006. Other four-year universities are contemplating similar actions. Community colleges are the training facilities for associate's degrees in nursing and Allied healthcare. There is a dearth of research on the success of these programs that generally function within severe budget deficits. This research is especially warranted in light of the current healthcare crisis that threatens only to worsen. The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics recently reported that over a million new and replacement nurses will be required by the year 2014 (U.S. Department of Labor, 2004). Research is sorely needed to understand and guide community colleges in recruiting and retaining nurses and other Allied Health professionals. What factors cause nurses with associate's degrees to transfer into baccalaureate nursing programs? Can community colleges, with their bare bones budgets, appropriately train the health care force of the future? How will community colleges continue to keep pace with technology and the fast pace of healthcare change?

Teacher Training

Similar to the situation involving nurses, the nation is experiencing a monumental teacher shortage. Community colleges are often cited as an appropriate response to the problem of preparing teachers to educate America. More programs are starting on campuses across the nation, typically in conjunction with four-year institutions, with the goal of training teachers to be recruited more broadly. In January 2006 the major universities and colleges in Washington State entered into a direct transfer agreement with the state's community and technical colleges to partner in teacher preparation (Washington State Board of Community and Technical Colleges, 2005). Another response to the problem is the inclusion of community colleges into fast-track alternative certification programs (ACPs) (Center for Community College Policy, 2003). ACPs provide certification to those

baccalaureate holders, regardless of discipline, who wish to teach but lack any experience or training in education methods. These programs are becoming more popular at community colleges as they generally are less expensive and shorter in term than those offered at four-year universities (Center for Community College Policy, 2003). But research is lacking to demonstrate if this method of supplying teachers will work. Will students trained through community college teacher preparation programs remain teaching in schools a decade later? Will these former community college students be more sensitive to today's children? Can community colleges provide quality teaching programs amidst their shrinking budgets?

Online Offerings

In its quest to bring economical educational services to all who will benefit, many community colleges are offering courses and programs online. If ever there existed a subject requiring research it would be online education at the community college level. Much of these ventures are heading blindly into the unknown despite the fact that online education typically flies in the face of what is known about good instructional practice: heavy doses of student-to-teacher and student-to-student interactions. While it has been shown that social and academic interactions can occur via email, chat, and other practices in the virtual environment, these premises have not been sufficiently tested among the types of students who attend community colleges. The diversity of students in community colleges begs that such analyses be disaggregated by gender, ethnicity, age, and socioeconomic status.

The biggest unknown regarding online community college education is the result of losing a sense of *community*. A major appeal of online education is its ability to nullify distance and reach individuals located far from the physical campus. But perhaps the biggest asset of community colleges is not the distance of its reach but rather, its depth. Community colleges should serve the local community. This mission does not currently include service to the world. What are the repercussions to students who are technologically inept, older, or have learning styles incompatible with online instruction?

Data, Data, Data

Rather than promoting more data collection, this essay is actually promoting the analyses of data that is routinely collected. Community colleges already have a vast treasure trove of data collected through college applications, financial aid forms, enrollment records, and other institutional forms. The Achieving the Dream Initiative, funded by the Lumina Foundation and currently working with 35 colleges across seven states, has verified that well-meaning community colleges have an abundance of data but lack the resources to perform their own in-depth analyses to promote appropriate policies (Lumina Foundation, 2004). Thus, while data may be prevalent, analyses are in short supply. Typically community colleges lack the resources (both time and money) to analyze these data sources beyond the measure required by state

and federal regulations (Hagedorn, 2005). Thus, much of the required research to back sound policy development can be performed using existing data.

Conclusions

Budget cuts in so many sectors generally signal an increase in community college enrollments. The current economic situation makes postsecondary credentials a requirement, not a frill. While only 20 percent of jobs required college education in 1959, that proportion has risen close to 60 percent today (Carnevale & Fry, 2000). Researchers have forecast a “baby boom echo” that will challenge the capacity of all colleges, especially community colleges (Carnevale & Desrochers, 2001). Individuals lacking employment and marketable skills will often turn to the community college for new training and hope. For this reason community college research is extremely important, not a frill. It is inappropriate to offer programs without prior research regarding the efficacy of their effects. This essay calls upon community college professionals to call for and acknowledge the need for additional research. Further, it is appropriate for postsecondary researchers to collaborate with community colleges in writing proposals that inform the U.S. Department of Education and private foundations of the need to further community college research. Community colleges are not a frill but a means to provide educational equity and opportunity. ♦

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Working in a Data Mine or Coaching? – The Importance of Research in One Community College

by Sharon Kristovich

Most research at a community college is applied. Its purpose often is to provide information on issues relevant to the mission of the college such as, “How have enrollment patterns changed in the past ten years?” “Are students’ learning?” “Do completers get jobs or transfer to a four-year college?” This information is often used by administrators in their policy and decision making. This is not to say that theoretical research does not have a role; but applied research supports a plethora of issues related to the mission and purposes of most community colleges.

Research at community colleges is often conducted, facilitated or aided by the institutional research office. Parkland College [Champaign, IL] has been fortunate to have an institutional research office to provide information and research support to the College for at least the last 15 years. In 2000, George Johnston and I had characterized the role of institutional research at Parkland as alchemy—turning data into information to aid administrators in their decision-making. In 2001, we characterized institutional research’s role as “working in a data mine”—using a variety of tools to probe into a vast store of raw material (data) in search of information “gems.” The focus at the time for our research program was to generate reliable, consistent information from a vast amount of data.

Examples of Research Used to Inform Decision-Making

Data Warehouses. Much of these research pieces important in the last decade are still important today. One example is data warehouse management, the process of establishing consistent data collection and storage procedures to ensure quick and accurate retrieval. Most warehouses nowadays use extraction methods to create snapshots instead of using “live” data. This method increases reliability and enables the researcher to provide information quickly and efficiently. At Parkland, regular course and student attribute extractions from our Student Information System are stored in SPSS so that statistical analyses can be conducted without reformatting datasets. Currently at Parkland, these data are only available to the research staff but research is being conducted to develop methods to deliver the data directly to stakeholders throughout the campus.

Fact Books. Another example is the college fact book. The purpose of these factbooks is to provide a digest of information about the college for decision making, so that stakeholders are not relying on anecdotes or bias. Because there are different levels of decisions at a college, it should not be surprising that there are different types of fact books.

Parkland creates two types of annual fact books. The first, called *Environmental Scanning Data*, is available as a brochure or on the Internet (<http://www.parkland.edu/oire/Envsc06.pdf>). This fact book is designed for a general audience, both within the college and the community. The document, updated annually at the beginning of the spring semester, provides a series of tables that address some of the most frequently asked questions about the college, such as “Who are our students?” “What is our enrollment?” “Who employs our graduates?” “Who are our employees?” This fact sheet serves several purposes: It provides descriptive information about the college, shows short-term (2-5 year) changes, and also provides baseline information.

The second fact book is called *Performance Indicators* and is updated annually at the end of the fiscal year. This document provides 5-year trend data, benchmarks, and goals for key areas such as asset maintenance, enrollment patterns, student achievement, and economic accessibility/affordability. These key areas were selected by college decision-makers as critical issues to monitor. From these indicators, college-wide strategic initiatives were derived for all areas of the college to focus on. Progress towards meeting these goals is monitored annually.

Surveys. Surveys are regularly used to assess the campus environment and satisfaction with it. Typically, survey respondents are asked to indicate how important the given statements are as well as the extent to which they agreed or disagreed, were satisfied or dissatisfied with them.

Parkland conducts three climate surveys during the spring semester on alternate-year cycles. Two of the surveys are student surveys. On odd-numbered years, the college conducts the Community College Student Survey of Engagement (CCSSE), a national survey which measures student engagement in academic and non-academic areas. The second survey, offered in even-numbered years, is a college-developed satisfaction and climate survey. The purpose of this survey is to gather information on program and service satisfaction, diversity issues, faculty and student composition, and social interactions among various lines: gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, and disability status. The remaining survey is a college-developed staff satisfaction/climate survey, with a similar structure as the student survey. Samples of these surveys can be found at our website (<http://www.parkland.edu/oire/oiredata.htm>). The Office of Institutional Research and Evaluation (OIRE) is responsible for administering and compiling the results of these surveys and sharing that information with faculty and staff. Focus groups are sometimes used to provide follow-up to the quantitative data.

Parkland also conducts a survey of all its program completers beginning six weeks after graduation to measure satisfaction with college courses, programs, and services as well as employment information (for career-program students) and continuing education information (for transfer students). In addition, for some career programs, annual employer surveys are distributed to the employers of our graduates. These surveys assess the satisfaction with and the skills of our graduates. Results are used to support program evaluation and career information for current students.

Accountability. At least half of all the research conducted by the OIRE for Parkland is for accountability purposes. Research of this type typically is conducted to demonstrate, often to an outside agency, that the college is doing what it says it is doing.

Parkland College is a part of one of the largest community college systems in the country. The Illinois Community College Board (ICCB) regulates and monitors the activities of 39 public community college districts throughout the state. As a part of this regulating process, at least 20 submissions must be made to ICCB on an annual basis. Included in some of these submissions are evaluation reports such as Program Review, Underrepresented Groups, and a review of whether Illinois educational goals are being met by the college (Performance Report). There are also a series of data submissions, such as apportionment datasets, enrollment datasets (annual and fall 10th day), and graduate completer satisfaction data. In return, ICCB submits data from the colleges to the federal Integrated Postsecondary Educational Data System (IPEDS). Colleges also receive data as to whether their students have enrolled at other Illinois colleges and whether they completed a program of study (Shared enrollment and completions data).

Each college appoints a coordinator for this information, and at Parkland, the Director of Institutional Research, Evaluation and Planning is responsible for coordinating these annual submissions. The advantages of the research office coordinating these reports and data submissions are consistent definitions, reduced redundancy in data collection, reliable data, and experienced evaluators working with review teams to provide analyses.

The regional accreditation self-study is another example of accountability reporting. Parkland participates in the 10-year North Central Association accreditation process. [For the most recent visit], employee committees were formed to monitor academic assessment and support unit assessment throughout the ten-year cycle. The OIRE works with these committees in an advisory capacity, providing reports and advice on the on-going analyses. Institutional Research also worked with the employee teams formed to write the self-study chapters to provide information and evaluation advice to the committees. The final conclusions are the result of consensus, discussion, and analysis from the committee, and necessarily the sole result of the research office.

Customized Analyses. In addition to the research conducted through climate, satisfaction, engagement, and completions surveys, customized analyses are also prepared. Curriculum assessment, labor market analyses, grant evaluations, enrollment management research, and academic outcomes research are conducted by OIRE working with stakeholders to identify each area's needs separately, providing customized solutions.

The Changing Role of Research

When George Johnston and I characterized institutional research in 2001 as "working in a data mine" we cautioned our audience that institutional researchers need to be involved in projects from the beginning, to facilitate the entire research process. At that time, we had already found that our most successful research required a team approach; our institutional self-study was the impetus for this expanded research role. The role of the institutional researcher in that process was to serve as a research "coach," guiding chapter committees in their research process, and supplying information to address their questions.

According to Borden (2004), the role of institutional research has gone from simply providing information to support policy and decision making to facilitating "organizational learning for the continuous improvement of higher education institutions and systems." The shift in the role of the institutional research office is a signal that the function research serves in a community college is changing as well. In the past five years at Parkland, the role of research has evolved from providing information to facilitating organizational learning by embracing an ongoing, continuous improvement process. Research has gone from being *reactive*, where information was requested by decision-makers to examine issues to *interactive*, where researchers are a part of decision-making teams working with practitioners to develop methods from the very beginning of a project. In other words, research is critical in the prospective as well as the retrospective, and the institutional researcher is doing more than working in the mines. Institutional researchers are also serving as coaches, guiding research teams to develop their projects with measurable objectives in mind.

Retention. One of the best examples of collaborative organizational learning is through Parkland's work with retaining under prepared students. Not long ago, it became apparent to the Parkland board, administration, and faculty that many of its students were arriving on campus unprepared to handle college level courses; consequently, a relatively large number of students were enrolling in one or, at most, two semesters before dropping out. In the fall 2001 semester, more than 75% of first-time students from district high schools were in need of one developmental (remedial) course; at least 45% of first-time students required two or more developmental courses. Approximately 8% of the overall college seat count was in developmental courses, and the number was increasing. A disproportionate number of under-prepared students and those who failed to

make satisfactory progress were minority students (and the minority population at the College is growing). In fall 2002, 44% of those on academic risk status were minorities, although the population was only 26% minority at the time. Under-preparedness and a failure to make satisfactory progress have resulted in low persistence rate (term to term and year to year). The persistence rate from fall 2001 to fall 2002 for first-time, full-time freshmen was 63.6% percent; for degree-seeking students, the rate was 66.2%. The College was losing over a third of its degree-seeking freshmen students from one year to the next. This in turn resulted in relatively low graduation and transfer rates. Of a 1999 cohort of first-time, full-time, degree-seeking students, only 57.7% had completed their course of study in 150 percent time or transferred to another institution within three years.

The College decided to address these problems on an institution-wide basis, because students in all fields of study must be successful in their developmental courses if they are to make satisfactory progress toward graduation. An Enrollment Management Team (EMT) with representatives from across the campus was formed (including the OIRE), and a retention subcommittee and a developmental education task force were also assembled to close this revolving door by creating a viable plan to retain students to graduation.

The College believed that increasing students' preparedness for college-level courses would result in more students being able to enter their chosen field of study and progress toward graduation more quickly. Parkland made a commitment to provide comprehensive services to these under-prepared populations through the creation the Academic Development Center, later enhanced by a Title III grant from the U.S. Department of Education. The Center has created an advisory committee called the "project management team" which consists of practitioners, administrators, and institutional researchers. They meet monthly to review research, evaluate center services, and develop new strategies.

Strategies were selected through a review of best practices and discussions with faculty, staff, administrators, and students at the College. The OIRE provided the research support and challenged the teams to build assessment and evaluation into their actions. Measurable objectives were set and baseline data were obtained using Parkland's well-established institutional research databases. Objectives are reviewed semi-annually, using both student-level and program-level assessments, and the information obtained from these reviews serves as knowledge for new initiatives. As a result, these strategies have been transformational, college-wide, and are truly helping Parkland's under-prepared students achieve their academic goals. Several of these strategies are highlighted below.

By the second year of the grant, 51.7% of those receiving advocate services returned in the fall 2005 semester, compared to 47.7% of developmental students not served by the center.

Student Development Advocates. Two full-time Advocates provide significant outreach to students in developmental courses by monitoring progress and connecting students with needed services before situations become irreparable. By the second year of the program, 78% of those receiving Advocate services in the fall returned in the spring semester, compared to 61% of those declining services. By the second year of the grant, 51.7% of those receiving advocate services returned in the fall 2005 semester, compared to 47.7% of developmental students not served by the center. Further, students receiving services earned nearly 20% more credits in 2004-05 than those who did not.

Facilitated Study Groups (FSGs). Research suggests that developmental students can benefit greatly from the additional time-on-task offered through these groups. These study groups, led by full-time mathematics faculty, target difficult courses rather than difficult students. The activities in these groups are comprised of academic diagnosis, study skills, professional tutoring, supplemental instruction, academic follow-up, and, when appropriate, computer-assisted instruction.

There is evidence of success in the data we have gathered. For fall 2004 and spring 2005 participants, when success was defined as earning a "D" or better, FSG participants had higher success rates than non-participants in all remedial math courses. Further analyses were conducted to explore whether length of stay in the sessions had any effect on success. FSG participants were categorized as two groups depending on average length of stay per individual: *0 to 60 minutes* (54 students) and *longer than 60 minutes* (62 students). Compared to non-participants, students who attended FSGs 60 minutes or less were less successful when success was defined as a "C" or better grade. When success was defined as a "D" or better grade, students who attended FSGs 60 minutes or less were more successful. Shorter periods of time in FSGs (e.g., on average, 60 minutes or less) were shown to be effective in helping students pass the course but not substantially in improving their grade. Longer time intervals increased the students' chances of substantially improving their grade. Thus, it appears that the length of time spent in FSGs does have an impact on success in those [difficult] mathematics courses.

Facilitated Study Group participants had higher success rates than non-participants in all remedial math courses.

Parkland College is committed to fostering a student-centered learning environment and intends to support these and other retention initiatives, which are truly making a difference for our students. The most successful retention initiatives have been campus-wide efforts that involved careful research and planning.

The Future of Research

Community colleges, including Parkland, still have a long way to go. Borden (2004) has some suggestions for the future of research:

- Accountability demands are increasing; we must keep moving forward and engaging the campus community in the research process from the beginning. It is too easy to focus on information support only.
- Colleges need to make the move from using information to make decisions to using the knowledge obtained from this information to drive planning for the future.
- Researchers need to engage the questions and questioners in the learning process to facilitate organizational learning.
- Researchers need to enlist the organization in the interpretation of data, and reduce the dependence upon the research office for this interpretation.

For the community college administrator, this means including institutional and other researchers in project teams to aid in the development of curricula and services, not just relying on them for information support to evaluate existing services.

Research has become an integral part of the community college environment. Every area of Parkland College, academic and support service alike, at least uses information to guide their decision-making. While the topics of interest (e.g., enrollment management) have not changed significantly, the way we use research in our decision-making process has. We have expanded

the role of research from merely using data to guide decision-making, to using the knowledge obtained from that research to guide our planning and development of new initiatives. We have taken our commitment to student-centered learning and applied it to the organization. Research has become the instrument to facilitate organizational learning, and the role of the institutional researcher has expanded to include coaching the organization in its own learning. ♦

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Research to Support Student Success

by Lois Alves

Although those of us who have had long careers in the community college sector of higher education have seen many changes, one thing has remained constant—our core mission of providing access to higher education to underserved student populations in our service regions. Thankfully, our understanding of this mission has evolved. In the early 1970s, community college leaders equated this notion of access to simply offering open enrollment degree and certificate programs. Everyone with a high school diploma or GED had a right to enroll in a community college and had “the right to fail.” Fortunately, we have moved well beyond this viewpoint and most community colleges now minimally define access to higher education as access to a reasonable opportunity for each student to achieve his, or her, educational goals.

In addition to an innate desire to support student learning and goal attainment, community college leaders are also under increasing pressure from federal, state, and local government entities and regional accrediting associations to measure, document, and publish their student achievement rates and student learning outcomes. While we understand and accept our responsibility to be accountable to our funding sources, accrediting bodies, and our students, we are concerned that the measures often suggested, such as graduation rates, are inappropriate in our open enrollment educational setting.

Over the years, community college researchers have worked diligently to gain a better understanding of our students’ educational goals as well as their academic and student support needs—to identify what works and what does not work to help our students succeed. Our college faculty and staff have used this research to develop and implement an array of academic programs and support services designed to maximize student achievement. Unfortunately, few community college faculty or staff would say that they are satisfied with the student success levels achieved. Too many of our students do not achieve their educational goals, and an achievement gap continues to exist for some minority student populations.

To improve student success rates, community college researchers need to help community college faculty and staff identify better models and resources to assess student learning outcomes at the curricular and co-curricular levels and measure their institutional impact on improving student achievement on our campuses. We need to build the capacity to compare our student outcomes on the program and support service levels to institutional peers in order to identify potential best practices for our individual college settings. We need to identify sensible student goal attainment measures that reflect the diversity of our students’ entering academic skill levels and the complexity of their lives. The fulfillment of this research agenda is essential

to achieving our mission of providing true access to higher education and a reasonable opportunity for success to our students. A few focus areas for community colleges researchers that would contribute to the achievement of this goal include the following:

1. Identify better ways to track and measure student goal attainment.
2. Pinpoint significant student transition points, in addition to graduation and transfer, to monitor student progress. Examples may include the completion of developmental course work; movement into and completion of college level writing and mathematics courses; and the achievement of sufficient technical proficiency to secure employment in their field of interest prior to degree completion.
3. Identify courses, portions of courses, or college experiences that function as gatekeepers to goal attainment – the point where many students, or certain student cohort groups, drop out or fail—and analyze the contributing factors.
4. Define appropriate measures of community college student goal attainment that colleges can use to compare their outcomes to institutional peers.
5. Develop and institutionalize research strategies to measure the equity of student goal attainment and outcomes by race, gender, age, and income level and to analyze underlying factors contributing to any inequities identified.

Student success is a campus-wide responsibility. Community college researchers, faculty, and staff need to work collaboratively to define measurements of student attainment and student learning outcomes that we can agree are appropriate in our educational setting, widely accepted by our community college colleagues, and routinely collected and available to community college practitioners. We also need to work together to create better ways to compare institutional student learning outcomes and student achievement rates to those achieved by institutional peers; measure the effectiveness of individual student and academic support services to improve student achievement; and assess the capacity of academic programs and support services to achieve equitable student outcomes across gender, race, age, and income lines. All of our talents, energies, and perspectives are needed to truly fulfill our mission of providing access and success in higher education for all of our students. ♦

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How Does Community College Research Impact the Students' Experience in the Community College?

by Deborah Garrett

As a Dean of Student Affairs for one of the regional campuses of probably the newest community college in the country – Ivy Tech Community College of Indiana and also as the current President of the National Council on Student Development, reflecting on the role of research comes easily. I believe we already know a lot about our students but applying that knowledge to practice can be challenging. To truly serve our current and prospective students, we need to do three things: (a) utilize research to optimize the effectiveness of our programs and services; (b) deliver programs and services that support student engagement and the attainment of their educational goals; and (c) develop a culture of student success among faculty and staff. Exemplary practices already exist among our nation's community colleges that we can emulate.

Many community colleges already do a superior job of using data to enhance current programs and create new ones. As a system of higher education, we are fairly comfortable with the data we have collected over the years about the wants, needs, and satisfaction of our students. Many colleges have consistently collected information from surveys such as the ACT Student Satisfaction Survey and the Community College Survey of Student Engagement. Many of us use student focus groups to target processes and programs for further review. Daily contact with students provides invaluable anecdotal data. Our Institutional Research Offices collect and analyze demographic and enrollment trend data and uses it to inform decision-making. For example, Manatee Community College (FL) has an excellent, comprehensive assessment program. Their plan is easily replicable, involves everyone, and connects their strategic plan with decision-making at every level of their institution.

Applying the use of research to practice can be very challenging. Those dedicated to the community college mission are typically eager to help others in this transition. Each month I have the honor of meeting with my fellow 13 regional deans for the Ivy Tech system whose recently adopted comprehensive mission is a departure from the old Ivy Tech State College system and necessitated a challenging learning curve. With our new mission statement and strategic plan, expanded commitment to transfer programs and students, and increased community expectations, without research and a wonderful group of helpful colleagues across this country, we would be at a loss sometimes on how to proceed. Other community colleges have been serving these students and this mission for many years, and with data from various community college research initiatives to serve as a guide, we have begun to ask ourselves questions such as: "What must we do to increase access to the college?" "How do our new students want their services provided?" "What will they need from us to be

successful in meeting their educational goals?" and "How will we prepare them for their next step and for life-long learning?" While we are confident we can arrive at the answers that best serve our local system within the collective expertise of the Ivy Tech community, we are equally appreciative to colleagues across the country who have shared their experiences and data when they approached the same questions.

With my involvement with the National Council on Student Development (NCS D) and as a member of the Board of the Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education (CAS), I have brought to my Ivy Tech colleagues, a national network of student development practitioners already committed to a comprehensive community college mission. We have looked to colleges such as Valencia Community College (FL) and Sinclair Community College (OH) to provide us results proven programming to assist us in meeting our new challenges. Valencia's *LifeMap* is an example of creating a new approach to helping students succeed which, in turn, changed the entire culture of their college. At Sinclair, they made tough decisions and revamped the enrollment process targeted at their most at-risk populations of students. Both of these colleges use research to validate and further refine their successes, and that research aids us in our decision-making.

I am proud of the work that NCS D continues in determining and recognizing exemplary practices. It is this type of activity that helps develop a culture of student success on our campuses. The NCS D process is based on the premise that it is not enough to recognize a new and exciting program without requiring research that validates if the program actually enhances student success. Without it, an award is less meaningful. For the Terry O'Banion Shared Journey Award process, proposals go through two juried phases for selection. During the first phase, each proposal is judged based on criteria such as "Program is outstanding and addresses significant student need" and "Program shows a demonstrable impact on student outcomes, based on verifiable data." The second phase occurs during our annual conference where a team judges each proposal once again, and the winner is given the Shared Journey Award. We have a somewhat similar process involving mandatory, verifiable results backed by research to judge the Dissertation of the Year Award.

So why do we pay attention to both local and national research about community college students? We do this first, to look for methods that ensure all students have easy access to our colleges and second, to provide the most effective programs possible to enable them to leave our institutions with the skills and experiences they need to reach their life's goals and remain life-

long learners. Ongoing research will be needed as students, communities, the workforce, and those of us in education have evolving challenges to address. Our work remains a continuous challenge, one we approach with enthusiasm, dedicated to our students' success. ♦

Dr. Deborah Garrett is Dean of Student Affairs at Ivy Tech Community College of Indiana, Southwest. She is also serving as the 2005-06 President of the National Council on Student Development, an affiliate council of the American Association of Community College. Deborah can be reached at degarret@ivytech.edu.

UPCOMING CONFERENCES

The **48th Council for the Study of Community Colleges' Annual Conference** will be held April 20-21, 2006 in conjunction with the AACC 86th National Convention in Long Beach, California. See <http://www.cscconline.org/conferences.htm>.

A Call to Action is the **2006 AACC Convention** theme to be held April 22-25, 2006 in Long Beach, California. For more information, see http://www.aacc.nche.edu/Content/NavigationMenu/NewsandEvents/AACC_Convention1/Annual_Convention.htm.

The League for Innovation's **Annual Conference on Information Technology (CIT)** will be held at the Charlotte Convention Center, Charlotte, North Carolina October 22-25, 2006. For more information see <http://www.league.org/2006cit/>.

Plan now to attend the **2006 NCS D Conference** October 22-24 at the Sheraton Hotel in Tacoma, Washington. <http://www.NCSOnline.org>.

The Office of Community College Research and Leadership (OCCRL) was established in 1989 at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. *Our primary mission is to provide research, leadership, and service to community college leaders and assist in improving the quality of education in the Illinois community college system.* Projects of this office are supported by the Illinois Community College Board (ICCB), and are closely coordinated with the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE), along with other state, federal, and private and not-for-profit organizations. The contents of the UPDATE newsletter do not necessarily represent the positions or policies of OCCRL, the ICCB, or the ISBE.

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