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Public Community College Faculty

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Introduction

The community college professoriate is distinguished by its mission, size, diversity, and educational background. A hallmark of faculty members in this sector is a commitment to teaching all students, particularly nontraditional students and those who might not otherwise have access to higher education.

About 20 percent of all higher education faculty work full time at the nation's 1,100 public community colleges (National Center for Education Statistics [NCES] 1997), and 44 percent of all part-time higher education faculty teach at community colleges. If full-time and part-time faculty are aggregated, approximately one-third of the American higher education professoriate teaches at community colleges. The community college professoriate grew from about 152,000 full-time and part-time instructors in 1973 to 254,000 in 1992, a 67 percent increase (Cohen and Brawer 1996; NCES 1997). The largest growth was in the number of part-timers, which increased by 53 percent from a little more than 11,000 in 1973 to 135,500 in 1992 (Cohen and Brawer 1996).

Between 1987 and 1993, the ratio of women faculty members at community colleges rose from 38 percent to 44 percent, compared with 32 percent among other sectors of higher education in 1992 (NCES 1994; Cohen and Brawer 1996). Of all higher education institutions, community colleges have the lowest proportion of men on their faculty, at 55 percent. Statistics on new hires indicate that the number of female faculty is likely to increase in coming years. Review of the 1993 National Study of Postsecondary Faculty (NSOPF) data show that new-entry women were found to outnumber new-entry men at community colleges by 6.4 percentage points (Finkelstein, Seal, and Schuster 1998).

The proportion of people of color among community college faculty is also noteworthy. Comparative data suggest that until now, community colleges were more likely than other sectors to employ women and minorities as members of the faculty. The supposed lead that community colleges had in the proportion of minorities that teach at their institutions is shrinking, however. Recent reports indicate that community colleges are beginning to

fall behind the four-year institutions in the diversity among their faculty, in particular among new hires. Finkelstein, Seal, and Schuster (1998), using NSOPF data to describe the new academic generation, report that only modest increases in the proportion of minorities took place in community colleges in 1993 compared with other institutions. Of those faculty hired within the last seven years, 15 percent were minority, compared with 18 to 20 percent at research and doctorate-granting institutions. Though community colleges have made gains in the proportion of minorities on their faculty payroll, the gains are not yet representative of the 30 percent minority student population they serve.

Educational background is another characteristic of community college faculty that diverges from their colleagues at four-year higher education institutions. Unlike four-year faculty, community college faculty are represented at each degree level. Nearly two-thirds of full-time faculty in public community colleges have a master's degree, about one-fifth a doctoral degree, one-eighth a bachelor's degree, and less than one-tenth a professional degree (NCES 1997). This distribution is rather diverse compared with the no less than 80 percent of the full-time faculty at research or doctorate-granting institutions who hold either a doctoral or professional degree as the highest degree earned (NCES 1997). Such a distribution reflects a breadth of training and preparation that best suits the academic and vocational needs of community college students. As long as the community college continues to provide a variety of educational services, including developmental, collegiate, vocational, and community education, the academic backgrounds of the faculty are likely to continue to span the entire educational and vocational spectrum.

The Academic Labor Market and Minority Pipeline

One characteristic that community college and university faculty share is a "graying faculty." According to NCES (1997), 45 percent of full-time faculty at public community colleges were over 49 years of age in 1992. An additional 37 percent of the faculty were between the ages of 40 and 49. Therefore, almost half of the full-time faculty is expected to retire within the next 10 to 15 years, and at least 80 percent within the next 20 to 25 years. Who will replace these faculty is a question that looms large and has not been fully addressed.

For years, the main source of community college faculty was the secondary school sector, but this is no longer the case. According to Gahn and Twombly (1998), who used the NSOPF-93 database to assess the dimensions of the community college faculty labor market, other two-year colleges were the primary source of employment among faculty employed fewer than three years. Secondary sources included college and university, elementary and secondary schools, business, and hospital and health sectors. Gahn and Twombly (1998) also report that, while 18 percent of NSOPF-93 community

college faculty respondents who were formerly employed in four-year institutions currently teach in the humanities, social sciences, and sciences, another 20 percent who were formerly employed in the business, health, and hospital sectors now teach in those areas. The findings of the study suggest that the business and health sectors are a growing source of community college faculty. Perhaps this is a reflection of the growth of vocational and certificate programs, and of the need at community colleges for faculty to teach the specified curriculum in these areas.

In discussions of the faculty labor market, the potential pool of minority faculty cannot be neglected. As community colleges continue to enroll significant numbers of students from different ethnic backgrounds, increasing minority faculty representation becomes a critical responsibility for colleges. Unfortunately, the current reality is that the diversity of the community college faculty is not yet close to achieving the same degree of diversity that exists among its student body.

The main reason cited for the slow growth in minority faculty representation is a shallow pool of potential minority candidates. In the early 1990s, Parsons (1992) and Robertson and Frier (1994), based on 1992 Education Testing Service data, noted that fewer minorities were selecting education and the social sciences as a career path during their undergraduate years, resulting in a limited pool of minority candidates for faculty positions in liberal arts disciplines. More recent statistics from 1994 to 1995 reported by the American Council on Education (Wilds and Wilson 1998) show continued increases in the number of engineering, business, health, and biology undergraduate degrees, as well as increases in the number of education and social science degrees across all minority groups. Among Hispanics, Asian American, African American, and American Indian students there was a 4 to 23 percent increase in the number of education and social science degrees awarded between 1994 and 1995. Degrees awarded in engineering and the health professions showed a 4 to 14 percent increase among Hispanics, Asian American, and African American groups. Though these gains are positive and occur across disciplines, they are modest compared with the proportion of the minority student population at community colleges.

A missing link in the community college faculty academic labor market and minority pipeline is the formal academic preparation of community college faculty. In the past, faculty preparation programs existed to some degree in the form of teaching internships, leadership programs, and university training. Unfortunately, these programs were critiqued as "grossly inadequate" and taught by "narrow, subject-matter specialists" (O'Banion 1973, 84). As a result, such programs have virtually disappeared. Today, consortia, professional development programs, and special initiatives by national associations devoted to developing and improving undergraduate teaching are the few sources of targeted pre-service training for community college faculty (Tsunoda 1992).

Replacing retiring faculty presents an opportunity for institutional renewal and diversification. Yet, the dimensions of the faculty labor market are relatively unexplored and unknown, and the links between the institution and the academic labor market are weak. In particular, the existing avenues by which young people can prepare for a community college faculty career are ad hoc and often not targeted to the specific needs of the community college and its students.

Recruitment, Retention, and Renewal

As the realities of faculty retirement become more pronounced, identifying the potential pool of candidates is only one part of the hiring process. Clear and well-defined recruitment policies and selection criteria are necessary in order to employ the most qualified instructional staff; that is, individuals who possess the knowledge, skills, and abilities to meet the challenges posed by a wide spectrum of students. In order to sustain the new existing faculty, recruitment efforts need to be coupled with retention and renewal efforts. The issues surrounding recruitment, retention, and renewal are not exclusive to full-time faculty, however. Because a substantial proportion of the community college faculty are part-time (approximately 40 percent), ensuring high-quality instruction and continuity of standards for full-time and part-time faculty is of growing importance. Although the extent to which two-year institutions should use part-time faculty is heavily debated, many colleges have implemented standards for recruiting, training, and providing development opportunities that apply to both full-time and part-time faculty (Allysen 1996).

Historically, formal recruitment plans have not been an established component of the faculty employment process (Hawthorne 1994). However, in order to attract and ensure the selection of the most qualified applicants, adoption of collegewide procedures and policies for recruitment is advised (Gibson-Benninger and Ratcliff 1996; Hawthorne 1994). Some practical procedures adopted by colleges include ensuring that the recruitment process coincides with the academic calendar; producing advertising that reflects the college's mission, goals, and values; implementing a training program for hiring; and establishing open meeting processes when awarding faculty positions (Barber et al. 1995).

Researchers such as Owens, Reis, and Hall (1994), Wilson (1994), and Opp and Smith (1994) advocate incorporating specific strategies that tap into and are sensitive to the minority applicant pool. Such strategies include the following:

- Encourage participation of area minority professionals on search committees.
- Use minority media in recruitment campaigns.

- Recruit through business and industry partnerships.
- Include minorities on interview committees.
- Determine which universities have minorities in the pipeline by discipline and start early recruitment efforts.
- Establish curriculum vitae banks.
- Establish summer teaching and research opportunities to interest minority graduate students.

The college must establish not only sound recruitment practices but also clear selection criteria. As open-access institutions, community colleges are committed to serving students' academic needs. A study requesting faculty to rate characteristics for successful teaching at two-year colleges found that the most important quality or characteristic of successful community college instructors is a genuine interest in working with a diverse student clientele (Higgins, Hawthorne, Cape, and Bell 1994). Therefore, the academic, economic, and social diversity of community college students drives faculty recruitment efforts. Although traditionally, the goals of recruitment have focused on degree attainment and preparation in the field, Hawthorne (1994) and Tsunoda (1992) suggest moving away from using academic preparation as the key measure in selection. Instead, they promote hiring role models for students. Those selected for faculty positions should possess the knowledge, skills, and abilities required for the areas of instruction and also a genuine interest in and understanding of the students. They should have an appreciation of and commitment to the open-access mission of two-year colleges. Additional characteristics advocated in the literature include pedagogical preparedness, strong interpersonal and communication skills, and skills and abilities in using technology (Law 1994).

A qualification of future faculty that receives limited attention from community college practitioners is an interest in scholarly development. Community college scholars recommend that evidence of an applicants' teaching ability, commitment to student success, and understanding of the community college's mission should be balanced with evidence of scholarship (Gibson-Benninger and Ratcliff 1996; Cohen and Brawer 1977; Palmer 1992a, 1992b; Vaughan 1992). Vaughan's definition of scholarship includes not only original research leading to publication, but also instructional materials development, textbook publishing, community service activities, and assessment of student learning as aspects of scholarship. When these forms of scholarship are coupled with teaching ability, intellectual vitality is likely to be enhanced. With that in mind, institutions might consider developing imaginative and valid procedures that would enable candidates for faculty positions to demonstrate their talents in teaching as well as in other forms of scholarship. Some examples include submitting teaching portfolios (Seldin 1991), demonstrating classroom teaching, and presenting videotapes

of candidates in action working with students and assessing student learning (Higgins, Hawthorne, Cape, Bell 1994).

Despite the importance of recruitment efforts, recruiting skilled and capable faculty is not enough. Efforts to retain new hires as well as veteran faculty are essential. On most campuses, pressures caused by increases in student enrollment, diversity concerns, student underpreparedness, and the combination of decreasing budgets and heavier workloads can take their toll. In response, some colleges focus on new hires and develop specific programs for this cohort. The programs include courses, orientation sessions, and mentors for new faculty at the college to help ensure retention and success in the classroom (Belcher 1995; Barber et al. 1995). Other colleges offer more comprehensive programs that appeal to both new and veteran faculty.

Development programs can be either formal or informal and range from simple to complex. For example, development programs for the improvement of teaching range from year-long focused programs of skill training, classroom observation, and assessment to one-day workshops profiling student learning and model teaching strategies (Alfano 1994). Some faculty development programs focus on curriculum development, whereas others focus on developing linkages with universities for the benefit of student transfer and continuing education for faculty. Of recent national interest is assessment of teaching and learning for faculty development. Angelo and Cross's assessment (1993) and Cross and Steadman's classroom research (1996) techniques are specifically designed to develop teaching by encouraging teachers to design feedback measures to assess what students are learning, then change their delivery and materials in order to maximize their impact on student learning (Alfano 1994). Faculty development programs allow professors to improve instructional materials, keep abreast of new technology and methods, and network with colleagues (Foote 1996).

Recruitment, retention, and renewal efforts cannot function independently of each other, and recruitment of the new generation of faculty requires an articulated vision of the skills and qualifications needed. Without systematic procedures for recruitment and well-specified selection criteria, faculty will be hired according to the immediate needs of a specific program, division, or department (Gibson-Benninger and Ratcliff 1996) rather than in view of long-term goals. A systematic and well-defined recruitment and selection process will turn the focus of retention and renewal efforts toward enhancing teaching and learning, thereby ensuring the future vitality of the institution.

Roles and Responsibilities

The community college's open-access mission places the responsibility of student success in the hands of the faculty. A student-centered approach is considered the means to success for students with a wide range of abilities, interests, and goals, and, consequently, community college faculty spend the

majority of their time teaching and working with students. Community college faculty spend 15 hours or more a week teaching, compared with 10 to 14 hours a week for the majority of their colleagues at baccalaureate and master's institutions and fewer than 4 hours a week for the majority of faculty at research universities. During those 15 class hours, 67 percent of community college faculty teach from 75 to more than 150 students. Community college faculty register more student contact hours than any other educational sector.

Heavy teaching loads and academically underprepared students present challenges to the faculty. Although they pride themselves on their dedication to excellence in teaching, the high educational demands of the job are evident in the instructional and assessment methods they use (Palmer 1994). To contend with large numbers of students, community college faculty rely heavily on lecture and lecture-discussion as the dominant modes of instruction. T contend with the less-than-college-level literacy skills of students, instructors use multiple-choice exams instead of essays or other forms of writing assessment. The advent of new technology, however, is likely to present faculty with an opportunity to cope with the challenges in new and more innovative ways. NSOPF-93 data reveal substantially greater use of computational software and computer-aided instruction in the public two-year college sector than in other sectors. Community colleges as institutions are promoting the use of technology as a means to reach a larger number of students and to accommodate a variety of learning styles, but the research on how and if these instructional tools and practices affect student learning in any significant way is still sparse.

Despite the heavy demands on community college faculty, some find time to devote to out-of-classroom scholarly activities. Forty percent of community college faculty say "they are currently engaged in scholarly work that they expect to lead to a publication, exhibit, or performance, and 20 percent say they have received a grant or special funding support for research in the last 3 years" (Huber 1998, 25). The community college struggles with the conflict between teaching and research. Many believe that teaching is the primary responsibility of the open-access college, and therefore scholarly work must take a back seat. However, others, like Vaughan (1992), Palmer (1992a, 1992b), and Cohen and Brawer (1977) have advocated the incorporation of scholarly work as part of the teaching function, especially the development of instruction and the assessment of student learning.

In their 1977 study of the two-year college instructor, Cohen and Brawer noted that community college faculty view teaching excellence as an activity rather than a process. Teaching as an activity is when the faculty member meets classes and lectures, corrects papers and exams, and carries out other teaching-related responsibilities. Teaching as a process involves effecting learning through bringing vitality to the classroom by remaining active in the discipline (Vaughan 1988), motivating students to higher levels of achievement through leadership (Baker, Roueche, and Gillett-Karam 1990),

or conducting classroom-based research on student learning and modifying curriculum and instruction accordingly (Cross and Angelo 1989). These processes allow a faculty member to be employed as a teacher, a scholar, a leader, and a classroom researcher.

Though Cohen and Brawer made these observations in 1977, a more recent study assessing professional attitudes of community college faculty from across the country found that caring for students was rated higher than expectations for students, time spent in classroom activities, and degree of effort spent on assessing student learning and developing instructional materials (Rifkin 1997). The implication is that a majority of community college faculty still view their professional role in terms of contact with students rather than in terms of their effectiveness in promoting student learning.

The task that confronts community college teachers is a formidable one. It is evident that community college faculty are committed to access for their students. However, there is an inherent tension for faculty between access and maintaining standards for success. As the demands for outcomes increase, faculty may want to view their teaching role in terms of student learning rather than student contact.

Evaluation and Rewards

"Faculty evaluation is where rhetoric about faculty roles meets the reality of rewards for professional work" (Huber 1998, 27). This statement is in response to the results of the most recent Carnegie Foundation study, indicating that only 44 percent of community college faculty agree that their institution is consistent in what it expects faculty to do and how it rewards them (Huber 1998). Despite the many programs in place at community colleges and extensive research on performance appraisal, few community college practitioners have been able to reach agreement on the stated and intended purposes of faculty evaluation programs. On one hand, faculty evaluation has a formative purpose: The results are used to support faculty development, growth, and self-improvement. On the other hand, faculty evaluation has a summative purpose: The results are used to make personnel decisions on tenure, promotion, reappointment, and salary. Community college practitioners agree that evaluation is a necessary part of teaching and learning. They also agree, in principle, that evaluation should help instructors grow professionally, but are unclear as to how to achieve that goal. Lack of a method to achieve the goals of evaluation is problematic, especially in light of the current movement encouraging faculty to incorporate scholarly activities beyond the activity of teaching, such as assessing student learning, developing instructional materials, engaging in professional service, and undertaking interdisciplinary projects. Faculty are not likely to incorporate these activities into their work lives if such activities are not measured, appraised according to a set of professional standards, or given proper weight in decisions about

promotion and salary increases (Huber 1998; Rifkin 1995).

Compounding the difficulty of establishing effective faculty evaluation programs is resistance (Arreola 1983). Often faculty suspicion, fear, and concern are based on perceptions that evaluation is used solely for summative purposes; that is, to make decisions about tenure, promotion, and dismissal, and not to improve performance (Mark 1982). Faculty bargaining agreements reflect the problem of faculty resistance. Bargaining units tend to lean toward protecting members from judgments made by administrators rather than toward enhancing professional performance, and the tendency to protect is negotiated into faculty contracts (Cohen and Brawer 1996). Thus, lack of clear goals and standards of evaluation generate resistance and suspicion that result in evaluation efforts having no practical effect on improving performance.

One of the rewards of the evaluation process is tenure. Although faculty responsibilities are not limited to teaching but also include governance, planning, community service, and customer service, NSOPF-93 data show that 96 percent of community college faculty believe that teaching should be *the* promotion criterion. Tenure is awarded after a single year, or, in many cases, after a probation of two to five years. The tenure process at community colleges is not comparable to the seven-year standard common in universities. Although tenure rules vary from state to state, in many cases as long as the instructor has fulfilled his or her responsibilities, advancement to the next step is awarded. In such instances improving performance is not an element of the decision-making process. Also, unless it is included in the state laws governing community colleges, tenure becomes a negotiable item in contract bargaining (Cohen and Brawer 1996).

Under such circumstances, the evaluation process becomes untenable. Salary is the monetary reward of the evaluation process. Historically, the community college professoriate income level has been higher than that of the secondary school instructors and lower than the university professoriate (Cohen and Brawer 1996). Today, the average salary of the community college professoriate is lower than the salary of the professoriate in other higher education institutions. The NCES (1997) reports a 15-percent gap between the community college sector and the rest of higher education. As reported by the NSOPF-93 study, 53 percent of community college faculty who are employed full-time earn salaries between $25,000 to $39,999 a year, and another 27 percent earn between $40,000 and $54,999 a year. These figures, however, do not represent the entire picture. NSOPF-93 data reveal that community college faculty earned an average additional income of $24,517 from teaching in other areas, such as tutoring. Also, the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching National Faculty Survey 1997 reports that one-fourth of community college faculty are also actively engaged in consulting or other professional services out of economic necessity. The implication is that community college faculty are taking on higher teaching

loads and moonlighting in order to earn higher rewards. In the long run, this is likely to have a negative impact on the effectiveness of their classroom teaching.

Professionalism and the Full-Time-Part-Time Debate

It has been difficult for community college faculty to attain status as part of the academic profession within higher education. In 1977, Cohen and Brawer observed that community college faculty at that time lacked a coherent identity as a profession. Over the last 20 years, the professional identity of the community college professoriate has advanced in some areas and not in others. Areas in which the continuing professionalization of the community college faculty is evident are higher levels of educational attainment, a growing number of professional organizations exclusive to community college faculty, expressed levels of commitment to the profession, autonomy from students and the institution, and service orientation to students (Rifkin 1997).

Even though the community college professoriate has made advances in its professional growth, these advances are shadowed by the growth of part-time faculty. Although not directly apparent, the extensive use of part-timers does affect the professional status of the community college professoriate. The debate over the advantages and disadvantages of employing part-time faculty is complex (Banachowski 1996). Among the advantages are cost savings, institutional flexibility, and the infusion of real-world vocational experience into the classroom. Among the common disadvantages are loss of positions to full-time faculty, and, of more serious concern, the loss of academic integrity.

A recent study measured differences in the professional attitudes between more than 1,500 full-time and part-time community college faculty from across the United States (Rifkin 1997). The findings reveal that part-time faculty differ from full-time faculty in their professional attitudes concerning scholarship (knowledge acquisition), autonomy from the institution, and integrity (ethical sense of responsibility). Areas in which part-time and full-time faculty are equally professionalized are their service orientation to students and their commitment to the profession.

Differences in professional attitudes toward scholarship refers to the finding that full-time faculty are more invovled than part-time faculty in the curricular and scholarly aspects of their teaching; in other words, more likley to use a syllabus, run item analyses, distribute written measurable objectives, attend conferences, and receive funds to work on field-related projects. Differences in integrity refers to the finding that full-time faculty tend to feel more of an ethical responsibility to the profession and the institution: More maintain office hours consistently, maintain active professional relationships with other faculty members, and participate in departmental curricular planning. Thus full-time faculty are more involved in the academic and disciplinary concerns and responsibilities of the educational community than are part-time faculty.

The areas in which full-time and part-time faculty are similar provide support for those who argue in favor of using part-time faculty. From an administration perspective, the part-time faculty service orientation to students and commitment to the occupation are useful to the community college - and some community college leaders may deem these qualities more useful than the professional attributes in which full-time and part-time faculty differ - but professional differences between full-time and part-time faculty in their individual attitudes toward scholarship and integrity are likely to have greater impact on the educational integrity of the institution than similarities in service orientation.

Even though both full-time and part-time faculty are equally committed to the occupation, the study suggests that the professional commitment of part-time faculty does not go beyond their interest in students to include aspects that are integral to the profession, such as curriculum, methods of instruction, and other forms of scholarship. Whether these differences are meaningful and to what extent they affect educational philosophy and institutional mission have yet to be explored. Nonetheless, these differences have an impact on the nature of the academic profession. If the community college is to be the nation’s premier teaching institution, as proposed by the American Association of Community Colleges (1988), then the institution requires a majority of professionals who are integral to the system and professionally committed to teaching as a way of effecting learning, not a majority of individuals whose involvement is limited to the activity of giving lectures and correcting assignments (Cohen and Brawer 1977).

The institutional pressures the community college professoriate faces over the part-time issue play a role in its ability to attain higher status. Regardless of how much the profession struggles against this situation, it is constrained by the institution of which it is a part. As community college leaders face increasing competition for public funds, they are considering the desirability of an institution in which faculty are given nonprobationary appointments or contracted over short periods (Alfred and Carter 1996). Distance learning and new instructional technologies also present full-time faculty with opportunities to diversify and take on more managerial roles in the development of televised curriculum, computer-assisted programs, and other technological methods of instruction. Their preferences are for an institution that is adaptable to changing consumer demands, and one where "administrators will have greater freedom to set performance standards for instruction" (Alfred and Carter 1996, 17). Through collective bargaining, full-time faculty have been able to limit the percentage of part-timers; however, they have not yet been successful in demonstrating the potentially harmful impact a professoriate made up largely of contingent workers may have on the educational philosophy and institutional mission of the community college. In light of growing sentiment for what Eaton (1997) called a strengthened role for executive authority in higher education, the community college professoriate not only faces the challenge of raising its

status as a profession, but also must convince the institution's leaders of the benefits such an elevation has to offer.

Conclusion

Community college faculty have an opportunity to reassess their role as teachers to half the nation’s undergraduates. Although the tension between access and maintaining standards for success will not abate, the movement toward a greater faculty emphasis on learning and less on mere student contact may serve to generate a greater sense of ownership for learning among students than may currently exist.

Diversity among faculty is essential for providing positive role models for students. A diverse faculty provides an effective and visible support system for the increasingly diverse student population. Minority faculty are essential to the multicultural campus, where they "act as role models, advisers, and advocates for minority students while they expose majority students to new ideas" (Colby and Foote 1995).

The tendency to want to use part-time faculty, either to replace retiring faculty or to meet trends in student educational demands, will remain strong unless convincing evidence is presented showing the benefits of filling positions with full-timers. One approach to supporting the cause of full-time faculty might be to focus attention on developing classroom research, innovative instructional practices, and ways of measuring student learning as part of the teaching process. Teachers who engage in scholarly activities around teaching and who affect student learning in positive ways should be rewarded. Without a meaningful evaluation and reward structure, the intrinsic motivation that plays a large role in sustaining faculty may lose its power.

The pedagogical demands of an open-access institution can be frustrating and require more attention as the community college student population becomes more varied. Maintaining faculty satisfaction and vitality while striving to meet societal demands for educational opportunity for all who can benefit will be a tough task, but the future of the community college as a corridor of educational opportunity depends on it.

References