ASSOCIATION OF COMMUNITY COLLEGE TRUSTEES

INVITATIONAL SYMPOSIUM on STUDENT SUCCESS
SEPTEMBER 24 - 25, 2017

ECONOMIC INEQUALITY
2017 Symposium on Student Success Summary

On September 24-25, 2017, ACCT hosted a Symposium on Student Success that focused on Economic Inequality. It was held in advance of its annual Leadership Congress in Las Vegas, Nevada.

Financial & Mental Health
Stephanie Bell-Rose, senior managing director and head of the TIAA Institute, gave the keynote opening remarks. She discussed how financial well-being and mental health concerns may contribute to a student's likelihood of success or failure. Student debt is a primary area of concern, and daily living expenses such as rent, food, and child care costs can be a barrier for students as they try to complete their studies. In 2016, TIAA completed a 3-year study with the Council of Graduate Schools that concluded financial literacy is critical for students in making smart decisions about how to manage money and pay down debt. Fifteen institutions participated in the study and offered students both traditional and non-traditional options to engage in financial literacy programs. Lessons from the project can be found at studentfinancialsuccess.org. Bell-Rose encouraged community college leaders to promote financial literacy to build lifelong habits around saving and spending. In addition, she stressed the importance of helping students to understand pathways to gainful employment.

Bell-Rose also discussed the impact mental and emotional health can have on a student’s success. She cited several sobering statistics about the number of students who have reported struggling with a current or past mental health concern and the lack of access to mental health treatment on campus, and the lack of access to a diverse community of counselors. She noted that the emotional well-being of students goes beyond depression and anxiety to a sense of fear, sadness, and anger related to microaggressions and other societal “norms” and feelings of being left out. In a recent survey less than half of all students of color rated their college experiences as good to excellent as opposed to two-thirds of white students who rated their experience as good to excellent. She urged community college leaders to be mindful of the needs of their students and to consider ways to provide support for their neediest students, and to model a culture of inclusion and acceptance on campus. Bell-Rose recommended two mental-health resources for colleges. They are the Steve Fund (www.stevefund.org/) and the Jed Foundation (www.jedfoundation.org/).

Inequitable Funding
Danny Yagan, assistant professor of economics, University of California, Berkeley, presented data on rates of mobility based on the types of colleges students attend. Yagan showed how low-income students who attend community colleges have a better chance of moving to the top income quintile than low-income students who attend more selective colleges. Community colleges have a much higher percentage of students from low-income families, yet graduates have earnings outcomes that are nearly comparable to those at highly selective colleges, which results in very high mobility rates, i.e., they have large numbers of students who come from poor families and end up with high incomes. He
encouraged community college leaders to tell this success story to encourage continued support for community college. Data on mobility rates are available at The Equality of Opportunity project (http://www.equality-of-opportunity.org/college/) and an interactive tool is available for participants to compare their own college’s mobility rates at https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/projects/college-mobility/city-college-of-new-york.

Richard Kahlenberg, senior fellow, The Century Foundation, followed on Yagan’s presentation to provide an understanding of the stratification of college funding based on sector. He noted that hidden subsidies benefit more affluent colleges. These benefits translate into a large disparity on per student funding. He stressed the importance of examining income outcomes and aligning them with labor market data. He encouraged community college leaders to advocate for adequate funding for community colleges since they serve a higher proportion of low-income students.

**Missing Male**

Marcia Calloway, research specialist, ACCT, and Denise Nadasen, former director of research, ACCT, presented an exploration of the challenges urban and rural males encounter that may impede their participation in postsecondary education and the workforce. Each researcher cited the similarities and differences between these two populations including high unemployment among both groups. They noted that some of the reasons men may not be participating in higher education include lack of access to institutions due to higher education desserts, the digital divide, incarceration, drug use and other sociological factors. Denise Pearson, principal policy analyst at the State Higher Education Executive Officers, moderated a discussion on what trustees can do in their communities to increase participation from these groups. She noted a recent study by Johns Hopkins University (https://hub.jhu.edu/2017/04/05/black-teachers-improve-student-graduation-college-access/) that found that students of color who are exposed to a minority teacher are more likely complete high school and aspire to postsecondary education. She cited the importance of building partnerships with the K-12 community to plant the seed that college is possible.

**Student Success Centers**

Caroline Altman Smith, deputy director, Education Program, The Kresge Foundation, led a panel discussion that included Chris Baldwin, associate vice president, Postsecondary State Policy, Jobs for the Future; Cynthia Ferrell, executive director, Texas Success Center, Texas Association of Community Colleges; Lawrence Nespoli, president, New Jersey Council of County Colleges; and Laura Rittner, executive director, Student Success Center, Ohio Association of Community Colleges. The panel discussed the strategies Student Success Centers are implementing to support and increase completion. These Centers aim to connect the array of initiatives that promote student success and connect this network of opportunities that have shared goals. Because colleges need to be able to respond to a rapidly changing landscape (e.g., demographic shifts, reduced funding, accountability standards), the Centers serve as an intersection for policy and practice. The Centers collect data to inform policy. The panelist recommended community college leaders need to know
and understand their data and then tell their stories. In addition, they need to find new revenue sources due to declining public funding and continue to support stable leadership on campus.

**Quality Credentials**

Debra Humphreys, vice president of stakeholder engagement, Lumina Foundation, facilitated a session that focused on opportunities for increasing workforce participation through new credentials including apprenticeships. Humphreys noted that future workers need to be willing to update skills to adapt to the changing nature of work. She cited Lumina’s commitment to closing equity gaps and supporting access. Lumina is targeting not only traditional-aged students but returning adults who have some education but no credential, and adults who have not had any connection to postsecondary education (e.g., displaced workers, and those who have been in the penal system). She noted Lumina is focused on quality credentials that have clear and transparent outcomes and lead to employment and further learning. Apprenticeships are one option that is trending now.

Mark Schneider, vice president and Institute fellow at the American Institutes for Research, gave an overview of the history of apprenticeships and described the typical requirements for completing an apprenticeship program. Diane Bosak, vice president for workforce strategies and policy at Achieving the Dream, and Jeff Lynn, vice chancellor of workforce and economic development for the Alabama Community College System, participated in a discussion about the pros and cons of apprenticeship programs. Bosak said a shared definition of what an apprenticeship is needs to be established and that the paperwork to certify an approved program can be a barrier for employers. Lynn indicated that the current model needs to shift and focus on the needs of the employers. He said communities need to undertake occupational forecasting to understand employer needs.

**Who Attended**

Approximately 114 individuals participated in the symposium, including: 73 community college trustees, 14 community college presidents; and 27 individuals from philanthropic organizations, national non-profits, government agencies, and other constituent organizations.

**Appreciation**

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