

*American Association of Community Colleges*

# Report on the 21st-Century Initiative Listening Tour

---

*August 2011*



*[www.aacc.nche.edu](http://www.aacc.nche.edu)*

## Contents

<b>Executive Summary</b> .....	3
<b>Introduction</b> .....	5
<b>AACC’s 21st-Century Initiative</b> .....	5
Phase 1: Listening Tour .....	5
Phase 2: 21st-Century Initiative Commission Report .....	6
<b>Listening Tour Findings</b> .....	7
Student Success Initiatives .....	7
<i>The Completion Agenda: Progress</i> .....	7
<i>The Completion Agenda: Challenges</i> .....	9
<i>Developmental Education: Progress</i> .....	10
<i>Developmental Education: Challenges</i> .....	13
Voluntary Framework of Accountability .....	13
Strategies for Dealing With Budget Constraints .....	14
Big Ideas for the Future of Community Colleges .....	15
What AACC Can Do for Members .....	16
<b>Moving Forward With Phase 2</b> .....	18
<b>References</b> .....	18

# Report of the 21st-Century Initiative Listening Tour

## August 2011

### Executive Summary

#### AACC's 21st-Century Initiative

President Barack Obama has challenged community colleges to educate an additional 5 million students with degrees, certificates, or other credentials by 2020. As state funding for education and other revenue sources continue to decline, now more than ever, there is a need to formulate innovative strategies to support this ambitious goal.

In response to the president's education agenda, the American Association of Community Colleges (AACC) is leading advancement of the next era of community college evolution through its two-phase 21st-Century Initiative. Phase 1, the 21st-Century Initiative Listening Tour, consisted of gathering information from a diverse group of stakeholders from across the country in the following areas: (1) student success, (2) Voluntary Framework of Accountability, (3) strategies for dealing with budget constraints, (4) big ideas for the future of community colleges, and (5) what AACC can do for members.

This initiative is not the first effort to realign the community college mission to reflect national needs in changing times, but it is unique in its approach to accomplishing the work that needs to be done. Stakeholder groups comprising college faculty and staff, senior administrators, trustees, college presidents, and state policymakers provided regional perspectives on challenges and opportunities that community colleges confront. This information will be provided to the 21st-Century Commission on the Future of Community Colleges as a useful resource to lead its work during Phase 2 of the initiative. As of August 2011, AACC President and CEO Dr. Walter Bumphus and senior staff have traveled to 9 states, participated in 13 meetings, and spoken with approximately 1,000 stakeholders. Some additional meetings are planned.

#### Listening Tour Findings

The challenges facing community colleges are daunting but, with careful coordination and continued dialogue, they are not insurmountable. Much progress has been made to date to improve completion rates among at-risk students and to ensure that institutions have increased their focus on data in the decision-making process. The major themes that echoed across stakeholder groups during the Listening Tour are summarized as follows.

#### *Student Success Initiatives*

- Colleges need to reexamine the role, scope, and mission of the community college and to ensure that current programs and services are aligned with the reengineered mission.
- The narrative in community colleges is being lost—plans are needed to ensure that the community college mission is not lost.
- Accreditation and its impact on completion must be acknowledged at the national level.
- Standardized placement test instruments and cut-scores are needed.
- Obstacles to closing the achievement gap for students of color must be identified, and “proven scalable practices” that increase retention and persistence among this segment of the population should be considered for adoption across AACC member institutions.
- Effective modularized or accelerated developmental education courses that address skill deficits while preparing students to successfully complete gatekeeper courses, which ultimately result in on-time completion, should be identified and disseminated to institutions.
- Offering baccalaureate programs should be explored in special circumstances where employment projections dictate the need.
- Dual credit and early college strategies are needed.
- Comprehensive strategies are needed to address achievement gaps.

#### *Voluntary Framework of Accountability*

- Colleges using VFA metrics participate in data collection that is focused on transparency, inclusion, and accountability.
- A consistent system is needed so that community colleges have a common understanding of what is being used to measure performance.
- Participation to date has resulted in exploration of the value that a college brings to students.

### *Strategies for Dealing With Budget Constraints*

- Higher education outcomes-based funding.
- A budget reengineering dream team to help colleges design programs in a much smarter way while working with the budgets they do have.
- Tuition incentive programs.
- Enrollment caps.
- Redesigning the institution's budget as a student success budget.
- Offering bachelor's degrees.

### *Big Ideas for the Future of Community Colleges*

- GPS: Guided Path to Success provides a roadmap that drives students forward using service-oriented career counseling combined with university and employer partnerships that enhance student transfer and career opportunities.
- College University Center. A strategic partnership between the community college and several senior institutions that offers students the opportunity to continue their higher education pursuits for select bachelor's and graduate degree programs without leaving the community college campus.
- IBM's Watson has already been farmed out to some research universities. Community colleges should engage IBM in a Watson-type project to explore how to help students learn in a new way.

### *What AACC Can Do for Members*

- Globalize student learning outcomes.
- Promote civic engagement.
- Identify best practices in online learning.
- Implement regional leadership development forums.
- Reengineer the AACC Convention.
- Tell an effective story defining dual credit and its components.
- Host more interactive video conferences.
- Establish a national database of promising practices and programs.
- Keep open access at the forefront of any conversation about redefining the role, scope, and mission of the community college.

### **Moving Forward With Phase 2**

The 21st-Century Commission on the Future of Community Colleges is charged with examining the community college mission in light of current economic realities. The commission will review information provided by stakeholders in the Listening Tour report and will make recommendations for more clearly realigning the community college mission to reflect national needs and for supporting the college completion agenda. Specifically, the commission will explore the following interrelated issues:

- Using disruptive technologies to strengthen and speed learning.
- Redesigning college structures, processes, and calendars to better match students' needs.
- Closing participation and attainment gaps to achieve greater equity.
- Bringing successful validated innovations to scale.
- Exploring the viability of being "all things to all people."
- Examining the credibility and value of the associate degree.
- Considering the adoption and inculcation of rigorous and relevant measures of success.
- Examining the collaborations public schools require to accomplish college readiness.
- Strengthening and reshaping developmental studies.

The 21st-Century Commission will make its recommendations to AACC at the association's annual convention in Orlando, Florida, in April 2012.

*So as we emerge from this current economic crisis, our great challenge will be to ensure that we don't just drift into the future, accepting less for our children, accepting less for America. We have to choose instead what past generations have done: to shape a brighter future through hard work and innovation. That's how we'll not only recover, but that's how we'll also build stronger than before: strong enough to compete in the global economy; strong enough to avoid the cycles of boom and bust that have wreaked so much havoc; strong enough to create and support the jobs of the future in the industries of the future.*

—**President Barack Obama** speaking “On Innovation and Sustainable Growth” at Hudson Valley Community College, Troy, New York, September 21, 2009

## Introduction

In times of economic uncertainty, community colleges have consistently turned to the experience of past generations as an avenue toward innovation and the modernization of their programs and services. This examination of the past requires scrutinizing lessons learned and promising practices. It also requires engaging in hard work by confronting difficult conversations as a way to honestly assess where the institutions may have failed to accomplish their key strategic outcomes and where there are successes that can be built upon.

The charge for community colleges to rise to a new level of accountability began with two groundbreaking reports. The 1947 report of the Truman Commission (President's Commission on Higher Education, 1947) recommended that community colleges make higher education accessible to the majority of Americans for economic and democratic benefits. Today, more than a half a century later, there is broad consensus that community colleges have helped level the economic playing field. In 1988, AACC established the Commission on the Future of the Community College, which set forward a reform agenda designed to strengthen the comprehensive mission the Truman Commission originally proposed, in *Building Communities: A Vision for a New Century*.

Community colleges have been able to continuously reinvent themselves to serve the ever-changing needs of society. With President Obama's increased focus on community colleges and on increasing student completion rates, and in accordance with its mission, the American Association of Community Colleges (AACC) is leading advancement of the next era of community college evolution with the launch of its two-phase 21st-Century Initiative. Phase 1, the 21st-Century Initiative Listening Tour, took place from January to July 2011. This report summarizes key points from the tour. Phase 2, now underway, began with the appointment of a 21st-Century

Commission on the Future of Community Colleges. The commission's charge is to build on the work of the Listening Tour and present a final report in April 2012. The Listening Tour and the work of the 21st-Century Commission focus on building broad engagement in the community college completion agenda, sharing evidence-based practices that can be brought to scale nationwide, and seeking big ideas and innovations that are transformative.

## AACC's 21st-Century Initiative

### Phase 1: Listening Tour

To establish a foundation for a report that will usher in the next wave of innovation in the 2-year college, AACC launched a 12–14 region Listening Tour. The Listening Tour has allowed a broad cross-section of people with a vested interest in the community college mission the opportunity to showcase promising innovations and evidence-based practices related to completion. In addition, Listening Tour participants were asked to share successful strategies to deal with budget constraints and innovative ideas and solutions to current and potential issues for community colleges. Participants were also asked to share how AACC, as the national advocacy organization and the voice of community colleges in the nation's capital, could be of more benefit to its membership.

The Listening Tour was launched on January 31 in Austin, Texas, at a meeting of the Texas Association of Community College Trustees and Administrators. Additional sites for regional meetings were chosen using a variety of factors including, but not limited to, the concentration of community colleges within specific proximity to the selected states' capitols, the number of rural colleges within districts, colleges willing to volunteer to serve as hosts, and the ability to solicit trustee involvement. In addition to Austin, other Listening Tour sites and the sponsoring entities were as follows:

- Michigan—co-hosted by Wayne County Community College District and Macomb Community College (Detroit)
- Washington, DC; Maryland; and Virginia—hosted at the offices of the American Association of Community Colleges and supported by the Maryland Association of Community Colleges, the Virginia Community College System, and the Community College of the District of Columbia
- Florida—in conjunction with the Florida Council of Presidents meeting (Tallahassee)
- North Carolina—hosted by Guilford Technical Community College (Jamestown)
- Illinois—hosted by Triton College (River Grove)
- Ohio—hosted by Sinclair Community College (Columbus)
- New York—hosted by City University of New York
- Southern California—hosted by North Orange County Community College District (Anaheim) New York—(site and date are pending)
- Northern California—hosted by Contra Costa Community College District (Martinez) Select small rural community colleges (sites and dates are pending)
- Iowa—hosted in conjunction with the Iowa Association of Community College Trustees Annual Conference (Des Moines)

In addition, listening tours are planned at select small rural community colleges (sites and dates are pending), and an electronic listening tour engaging students is planned in conjunction with Phi Theta Kappa.

To ensure that all points of view were reflected in each region, local college presidents, trustees, administrators, and faculty were asked to join state policy leaders for courageous conversations focused on key issues embedded in the completion agenda.

All Listening Tour meetings followed a standard agenda. Participants received brief updates from the AACC president and vice presidents for key programmatic areas. The bulk of the meeting time was devoted to gathering feedback from participants in the areas of (1) student success initiatives to support the completion agenda and improvement of outcomes in developmental education, (2) strategies to address budget constraints, (3) innovation for the future of community colleges, and (4) how AACC can better serve member institutions through advocacy, communications, programming, and research.

## Phase 2: 21st-Century Commission Report

The goals of the 21st-Century Initiative are as follows:

- Gather information to inform strategic work, by both AACC and the field, to enhance the effectiveness of community colleges in serving community and national interests over the coming five years, with long-range implications that motivate the actions of community college leaders, trustees, and other stakeholders for the next 25 years.
- Build focus and momentum for the community college completion agenda.
- Identify critical roles for AACC in promoting higher levels of community college completion.
- Build support for rigor, transparency, and accountability in work to appropriately measure and monitor community college performance.
- Promote strengthened understanding among policymakers, business leaders, and the general public regarding the contributions and challenges of American community colleges.

The 21st-Century Commission is tasked with building on the results of the Listening Tour by examining and providing recommendations on interrelated issues such as the following:

- Using disruptive technologies to strengthen and speed learning.
- Redesigning college structures, processes, and calendars to better match students' needs.
- Closing participation and attainment gaps to achieve greater equity.
- Bringing successful, validated innovations to scale.
- Exploring the viability of being “all things to all people.”
- Examining the credibility and value of the associate degree.
- Considering the adoption and inculcation of rigorous and relevant measures of success.
- Examining the collaborations public schools require to accomplish college readiness.
- Strengthening and reshaping developmental studies.

## Listening Tour Findings

Comments and responses provided by participants have been paraphrased and bulleted, and arranged by the state from which the comments were gathered.

### Student Success Initiatives

---

#### *The Completion Agenda: Progress*

##### Texas

- **Developing clear transfer pathways.** Tuning Texas, a joint initiative between the Higher Education Coordinating Board and the Lumina Foundation, allows institutions to apply the “tuning” process to STEM disciplines to support improved completion rates through strengthening transfer agreements, establishing common lower-division courses and learning outcomes, and aligning dual credit courses with high school curriculum.
- **College and Career Readiness Standards** for high school students have been implemented statewide.
- Advise TX and Generation TX **programs to promote a college-going tradition** focus on Hispanic and Black students and their parents.
- **To improve the usability of state education data for decision-makers,** Texas published the *Texas Public Higher Education Almanac* and created the Texas Higher Education Data site.

##### Michigan

- **Reverse transfer.** If students earn the appropriate credits from the university, they can transfer the credits back to the community college and the institution will award them an associate degree.
- **Center for Student Success.** The center has a three-pronged focus. One is figuring out how to intentionally build capacity at the state level in order to support the various communities of practice, communities of innovators locally. The second is building research capacity. The third one is for the center and community colleges to be a convener for this conversation.
- **An external audit** of the institution’s functional areas was completed, and recommendations were woven into the completion agenda.

- **Revision of the institution’s strategic plan** focused on student success and the inclusion of metrics to measure the work being done. The rewriting process allowed for the identification of three factors of student success: college readiness, employment readiness, and transfer readiness.

##### Washington, DC; Maryland; and Virginia

- **State Summit on Completion.** Colleges were asked to present best practices at each college that focused on increasing the number of students receiving degrees and the challenges to defining “completion.”
- **Career coaches in high schools.** A community college office in the high school is staffed by a career coach for about 25 hours a week. The coach’s responsibility is to educate the student and parent about the increased opportunity for improved quality of life if the student attends a community college. The high school counselor and career coach work closely for seamless transfer.
- **Certified life coaches** provide training for the high school professionals that have committed to serve as coaches for students.
- **Step Up program.** People from the college volunteer to coach students by assisting them with addressing any obstacles that they are facing. The coach meets with the student at least one hour per week in person or via telephone.
- **Volunteers for Success** is a mentoring program that assists students with addressing life issues.
- **General Education Certificate.** Similar to the career readiness certificate, the general education certificate acknowledges when students have crossed specific programmatic thresholds. It is used as a kind of a retention tool, and also as a check on the completion agenda.
- **Packaging financial aid for 4 years for all students,** which tells students that they are going to get more money if they go to school full time. This has resulted in more students going to school full time and thus receiving more Pell money.

##### Florida

- **Finish-up Florida** is a new website that assists in readmission for “stop-out” students as well as assisting them with financial aid applications and advisement services. The goal of the project is to reengage disconnected adult students and inform them of new and enhanced opportunities to complete their associate degrees.

- **Expansion of College Readiness Testing.** SB 1908 expands college readiness testing of 11th graders and makes remedial coursework available for 12th graders.

### North Carolina

- **Addition of certificates and diplomas.** Many students who couldn't qualify for Pell grants would come to college for a certain period of time and then they would have to go work and earn money. The college found if it could keep them for a year and award them a credential, students could get a job, earn some money, and then come back to school and finish.
- **Completion agenda plan.** The college is putting together the tools that are out there in many other states, such as testing and credit for life experience, and all the other things that have already been invented that are tools that the institution hasn't been using. The goal is to put them into practice in the next three years—in the institution's strategic plan.
- **Changing the graduation fee policy** gives students the incentive to save money if they finish early. Part of the completion agenda is to help people understand that the graduation fee is there because students are expected to graduate.
- **Mandatory orientation** for new students maps out an academic career pathway for them before they take the first class.
- **Failure of math after transfer.** Working on the idea that a student starts at the beginning with certain courses and works through the sequence pushes students to get their math courses completed before they transfer, which will improve transfer rates and completion.
- **College Foundation of North Carolina pathways partnership.** The goal of this initiative is to increase the college-going rate of North Carolinians by providing comprehensive college and career planning resources, electronic applications and transcripts accepted by all North Carolina colleges and universities, and information on student financial aid and college affordability.
- **A comprehensive articulation agreement** provides a seamless transition for students from 2-year to 4-year institutions.
- **Minority Male Mentoring Programs (3MP)** adapt existing community college models to provide minority male transfer students with academic support and mentoring in order to improve their retention and graduation rates.

### Illinois

- **Complete College America Team.** The initiative encourages projects among community colleges for remediation, acceleration, and reform. The initiative is in the experimental phase.
- **GPS: Guided Path to Success.** The GPS program provides a roadmap that drives students forward using service-oriented career counseling combined with university and employer partnerships that enhance student transfer and career opportunities. The program aims to create the right circumstances for increased learning that provides solutions to obstacles in the academic pathway before they become problematic for students.
- **The College University Center** is a strategic partnership between the community college and several senior institutions that offers students the opportunity to continue their higher education pursuits for select bachelor's and graduate degree programs without leaving the community college campus.

### Ohio

- **Student success agenda and completion.** All five Achieving the Dream institutions have become developmental education institutions.
- **Ohio has a nationally recognized performance-based funding formula** in which the basic subsidy for public college and universities is based, in part, on degree completion, course completion, and other success points. The formula also includes weighted incentives for achieving successful outcomes for at-risk students.
- **OhioLearns!** Gateway supports online and distance learning.
- Incorporation of **adult basic literacy and education programs and adult workforce education** into the Ohio Board of Regents to create a more comprehensive and seamless postsecondary education system.
- Ohio has adopted **statutory changes** designed to improve the college readiness of the state's high school graduates. These include adoption in 2007 of the state's rigorous Ohio Core Curriculum and, in 2009, reforms that replaced the state's graduation test with new end-of-course exams and a nationally recognized college entrance exam.
- **A statewide placement policy** identifies specific standards (ACT and Compass cut scores) for determining whether students are college-ready—specifically for their first nonremedial courses in English and mathematics.

## New York

- **Cooperative education initiative.** A partnership between college, business and industry leaders, economic development organizations, and private foundations will allow students to earn salaries and college credits while simultaneously completing their degrees and gaining on-the-job training in high-need fields.

## California

- **Coordination for transfer and templates for degrees.** Through passage of legislation, California has jumpstarted the alignment of curriculum between community colleges and universities to ensure that credits aren't lost through transfer. In addition, the academic state senate has taken the lead in the development of templates for degrees.
- **Community college/industry partnership.** The community college works with the hub bio-tech industry to provide a summer camp to prepare incoming high school students with the skills necessary to perform successfully in industry internships.
- **Teacher training and curriculum development.** A summer camp delivers training to science teachers to ensure that they remain at the forefront of advances in the industry. This camp provides teachers with resources to make sure that the curriculum delivered to students is relevant.
- **Accelerated Learning Academy.** Rather than providing the curriculum of basic skills in math and English on different levels, the classes are combined into one semester. The average passage rate of a California class is 65%–70%. Skipping levels accelerates the students toward the point of transfer. The program does not drop major components or dumb down the curriculum.
- **Promise Programs** seek to engage unified districts and their local California State University campuses to work toward improving completion rates. Models and pathways are being created to guarantee courses and priority registration to provide students with a plan and hold them accountable. The programs help students get through their degree four-pack (two math and two science classes) in one semester.
- **Study groups support closing the gap.** Faculty create study groups, and those students who participate have greater success. However, students of color have to be encouraged to participate in these study groups. In addition, student

engagement in clubs and extracurricular activities tends to drive completion. The colleges are working to increase the use of study groups.

- **Maximum Achievement Program (MAP).** This program focuses on working with underrepresented populations, particularly Black men, to increase GPAs. Working in collaboration with Upward Bound TRIO, students' GPAs rose from an average of 1.4 to 3.1 in 2 years.

## *The Completion Agenda: Challenges*

### Texas

- **Alignment of the completion agenda.** Universities are unclear about how pathways for transfer lead to overlap and what it means to be prepared. Texas has no statewide systems.
- **The completion and timeframe are not realistic.** Achieving 50% in 3 years is not realistic because 95% of community college students attend part time. This is the opposite of the situation with 4-year institutions. If the focus were on full-time community college students, the colleges would likely be competitive.
- **Addressing students' life issues.** A new population of students exists, and many are first generation, with personal issues that the college is not aware of or equipped to handle. In order to focus on success, the college must find out more about what is going on with the students. The desire is there, and education will make a difference. The college needs to bring in social services and other support systems and get more fully into the mentoring business.

### Michigan

- **Budget.** How do institutions take the efficacy of what is in place now and scale that up so that they can continue to reach out to students one at a time and meet them where they are? Success is about the interaction.
- **Determining where students are in the degree completion process.** The college relies on the students to determine where they are in the degree completion process and to do self-monitoring, which is not successful.
- **Constant attention and transparency to the issue of financial aid** is needed, specifically about where students are in the financial aid process, tracking the inquiries that are coming in and the phone calls that are in the queue, and being very open about sharing that information. The institution is working hard to streamline the system to

remove obstacles so students can be successful in getting the dollars that they need to complete their course work and their degrees.

- **Learning to count noncredit workforce development.** Until the colleges are able to articulate in-house and until states can learn to count workforce training, community colleges are going to have a problem with the completion success rate.
- **Build completion by design into institutional systems.** There is a need to fashion simple mechanisms within data systems so that students can really assess how well they are doing.

#### Washington, DC; Maryland; and Virginia

- **Focusing on a completion agenda can adversely affect the mission, vision, and focus of community colleges** if there is no discussion about maintaining accountability and affordability.
- **Focused advocacy.** Community colleges and AACC can work to ensure that the message about completion stays prominent. This is the beginning of the momentum; a more focused advocacy plan could be put in place.

#### Florida

- **Measurement of the completion agenda.** There needs to be better dialogue for the starting point and the ending point on completion.
- **Regulatory requirements.** There is a provision (integrity regulation) that did not go through the negotiated rule-making process. It was not even discussed. Some members of the committee were stunned to see a distance learning component. It is inherently unworkable, and it is not a very good policy.

#### California

- **Lack of master planning.** There is no focus on high-demand occupations. Volume in certain careers has decreased, and students cannot find jobs. It is important to ensure a sustainable focus on educating students for careers where jobs exist.
- **Equity and closing the gap.** There cannot be a discussion about completion without having a courageous conversation with people from all over the district about equity and closing the gap. Colleges need to look at data in terms of student success. Service learning is important to implement in 2011–2012 in closing the achievement gap.

- **Satisfactory academic progress** is currently not a requirement for student success.
- **Number of levels of basic skills courses.** Having four levels of basic skills courses is defeating. Only about 10% of students complete them.

#### *Developmental Education: Progress*

#### Texas

- **Use of a single assessment instrument.** The state is introducing legislation enabling the use of a single assessment instrument to determine college remedial education standards.
- **Modular math** allows students to enroll in the developmental math course and concentrate for long periods of time on a particular concept. When they master one concept, they move to the next. At the end of the semester, if they haven't mastered all of the concepts, they haven't failed the course. When they begin the next semester they can pick up where they left off.
- **Bridge courses in developmental math.** Students repeat only the modules needed, not the whole course.
- **Flexible entry/flexible exit,** delivered as a modular approach, allows students to work at their own pace. Students are progressing through three levels of developmental education in less than a semester and really comprehending the information.
- **Mandatory student success course** for students in the second semester of high school. The Texas Education Authority gave special permission to offer the course during the second semester of the sophomore year of high school, and it counts toward high school graduation.
- **Developmental education summit.** All developmental education faculty meet for a 3-day intensive workshop. This initiative has created substantial synergy in the faculty's approach to teaching developmental education.
- **Non-course-based remediation** is offered that works very well in pushing the needle on completion of developmental education, particularly in math.
- **Developmental education is the direct route to certification.** Colleges are hoping to provide a model to offer this service to students.
- **Coordination between developmental and adult basic education** addresses the needs of students who come to

the college not prepared for even developmental education courses. The model will allow students to enroll in the adult basic education program first and easily transition into the developmental courses or the regular college courses.

- **Forced remediation** is offered in block sections, with cohorts and mentoring.
- **Minority Male Initiative.** Students attended the Black, Brown and College Bound Summit and were exposed to social issues that impact student behavior.
- **Identification of gaps via research.** Freshman seminar, a credit-bearing humanities course, increases retention by 15%, thereby improving the gateway to degree completion. There is still a big gap with young men; service learning has assisted with closing that gap.

### Michigan

- **Modularization of developmental courses.** Breaking a 5-hour course up in terms of being able to modularize that particular program where students receive credit for what they can do.
- **Math summits.** All of the high school math faculty, college math faculty, and other colleges and universities come together to participate in a three-day meeting and come to some agreement about curricular standards.
- **Brush-up courses** are offered to students whose cut scores were a point or two below where they need to be to move into a college-ready course.
- **Summer bridge courses** are for students who may be a few points below in terms of cut scores, but who can benefit from being on the college campus before beginning their fall semester.
- **Demonstrating success in remedial education** in the college.
- A first-time agreement on **alignment of high school and college curriculum exists** between the college and local high school. The expectation is that there will be an agreement on the tests that both entities use and that college readiness will be defined the same way.

### Washington, DC; Maryland; and Virginia

- **Revamped developmental education courses** enable students to complete courses in eight weeks or less.
- **The current developmental education model** is being eliminated in favor of building requirements for students based upon their career paths.

- **Elimination of Compass testing.** The institution has eliminated Compass testing and opted to use a firm charged with developing diagnostics focused on career paths. Students will be enrolled in courses to obtain the skills that they do not possess.
- **Mid-Maryland Allied Health Consortium.** Students take a general education course at their home school then attend one of the other community colleges to complete requirements if courses are not available at the home school.

### Florida

- **Standardizing remediation.** Florida colleges are working to ensure that math, reading, and writing courses become transferrable within and between institutions. The new test that will be used in the state will have a diagnostic feature allowing colleges to focus on the actual skills that need remediation, helping students earn college credit more quickly.
- **Collegewide minimum reading requirement of six credits.** A consortium was formed to supply technical assistance and professional development and technology resources to support students reading below the 6th-grade level who are not initially admitted. There is a reentry path when students attain the required reading level that allows them to continue on. This is a more effective way to deal with extremely low levels of literacy.
- **Success Academy.** By going into high schools and testing students early to see if there are deficiencies, the college addresses students' need for remediation prior to their exit from high school so that when they graduate they are eligible for general education courses.
- **Postsecondary Education Readiness Test (PERT).** This new college placement exam more accurately places students in entry-level college coursework, resulting in greater success and persistence to degree completion. Development of the PERT diagnostic assessments will provide targeted information about specific deficiencies.
- **Piloting modularized approaches to developmental education.** Six colleges are piloting various modular designs that allow students to focus on the skills they need to move on to college-level coursework while enhancing their overall discipline-specific knowledge.

### North Carolina

- **Eliminating auto-retake for Compass.** Students who do not do well on the test cannot automatically retake. The

student must go through a review process online or face to face.

- **Career and College Promise.** The state's agenda fits criteria for the Race to the Top funding and moves assessment into public schools across the board in 10th grade so that more remediation will happen with community colleges and public schools in later years.
- **Basic Skills Plus** is an attempt to add basic skills to developmental education rather than waiting for basic students to cross over into developmental education.

## Illinois

- **Road Math.** All developmental math courses are reconfigured so that students do not sit in a computer lab alone but are accompanied by tutors all the time. This allows students to proceed at their own paces.
- **Catch Up or Speed Up program.** The Compass test is administered in the junior year of high school. If these students are found not to be college ready the college takes the developmental courses into the high school. For those that are ready they will be offered the college's first general education math course so they can graduate with the credits and can transfer anywhere.
- **Participation in college and career readiness** involves setting up an advisory group and working with curriculum through K–12, with a stress on testing. It changes the curriculum, but it gets district administrators engaged.
- **Open learning centers with ALEKS software.** ALEKS determines what students know and builds programs to take them to next level of a blended learning program in which students learn better by exchanging and discussing information with others.
- **HAWKES software** provides more individualized, computer-based activities.
- Integration between English, math, and student support services.
- **Partnering with a reading program, Read Right.** Students are showing two grade levels of improvement in reading in 14 to 16 clock hours.

## Ohio

- **Math boot camp.** High school students take the Ohio Graduation Test (OGT). If it is determined that they are

not college ready, the community college faculty goes into the high schools when they are taking OGT, and the students that pass work with the college in the math boot camp. The math boot camp is team taught with the high school teacher and college faculty.

- **Math Start** takes students who would have tested into adult basic math into a quick-start program. Many of these students are captured into the developmental system and are offered a free math remediation opportunity using a Pearson product.
- **Quantway and Statway** move away from the assumption that college algebra is the goal for all students. Statway is a learning community of faculty nationally who are looking at statistics as a very appropriate quantifier course for students in applied fields.
- **Champion City Scholars.** Fifty first-generation 8th-grade students are selected every year and get support for two years of college if they maintain their high school grades. They are working with mentors.
- **Solutions program.** A program was converted so that students who score 59 or lower in reading go into developmental education with specialized services, academic instruction, and soft skills. The college is able to progress those students in many cases past developmental education to regular courses.
- Courses are offered at an Urban League site.
- Through an integrated **Teaching and Learning Integrated Team Model**, tutors and faculty are having conversations with each other so they know what is happening in the classroom. The college is also beginning to do supplemental instruction where there is a peer tutor in the class with the students. A mentor training program includes teaching about developmental education and what it means to be a developmental education student at institutions.
- **Early alert programs** provide intervention for students in developmental math before they fail a course.

## California

- **Enhanced utilization of school of continuing education.** Students who are assessed and place in the lowest-level course are redirected to the school of continuing education or noncredit courses as a way to more efficiently use resources internally.
- **Pilot program to address math placement.** High school students who pass the math courses that have been

approved by community college instructors and will not have to take a placement test and will be moved into college-level math. This will allow more students to graduate in less time.

- **Intervention.** The college created a higher cut-off score in English requiring that students read at the fifth grade level and created more hours in two levels below the freshman composition class. So, students are in class for six hours with the same professor. At the next level the course is paired with a lab course so that students are provided with support.
- **Accelerated developmental math and English courses.** This strategy addresses improving completion rates for students who take courses for 4–6 years without achieving their goals.

### *Developmental Education: Challenges*

#### **Texas**

- **More faculty and staff involvement.** Given the primary role that faculty and staff play in teaching and supporting student learning, student success initiatives should focus more attention on directly engaging these personnel as leaders in the colleges' reform process. Many faculty teach remedial courses that enroll high-risk students. Because these instructors are on the front lines in addressing the needs of these students, their involvement in the process to develop and implement strategies for their improvement is essential.

#### **Michigan**

- **Rigor within developmental education.** Developmental courses have been treated in the same way as other courses. There was no change in the teaching methodology, not even the modification of class size or doing any things that normally appeal to faculty members. It was just simply a continuation. The institution is now looking very carefully at remedial or developmental courses that did not result in improved performance in the subsequent credit course and eliminating those courses.

#### **Washington, DC; Maryland; and Virginia**

- **Confronting data regarding the lack of success of students in developmental education courses.** Community colleges and superintendents review data on the number of

students requiring remediation and develop plans to address remediation in the senior year of high school.

- **Addressing the affective domain.** Institutions are not addressing the life issues of students, which are often huge and are at the root of the student's lack of success.

#### **Florida**

- **Financial aid regulations.** A plan is needed at the national level that will allow community colleges to address the regulations of federal financial aid as it applies to moving through developmental education at an accelerated pace.
- **A common definition of college readiness across states.** Without a common definition, the common core exit point will become de facto by definition of college readiness, which would be very detrimental to the ability to go to the table to discuss the whole remedial issue.
- **Alignment with secondary schools to help students through remediation.** Community colleges have to talk about 21st-century issues and understand that they have to assist the public schools with remediation. Barriers at national and international levels need to be identified and overcome.

#### **California**

- **Adjunct faculty.** Adjunct faculty members teach many basic skills courses, but there are insufficient funds to train them. Recently a basic skills academy was established, which is open to all faculty, adjuncts included, as a flexible opportunity that is integrated with the college's primary mission.

## **Voluntary Framework of Accountability**

---

#### **Washington, DC; Maryland; and Virginia**

- **County statistics.** Using VFA metrics, community colleges participate in data collection that is focused on transparency, inclusion, and accountability.

#### **North Carolina**

- **Conformity.** A consistent system is needed so that community colleges have a common understanding of what is being used to measure performance so that there is no need to have different datasets for states, the federal government, and Southern Association of Colleges and Schools.

## Iowa

- **Early participation in VFA.** Participation has resulted in exploration of the value that a college brings to students. How do colleges do things differently for student success? Recommend that the dialogue shift primarily to student success and less to accountability?

## Strategies for Dealing With Budget Constraints

---

### Texas

- **Legacy Scholarship.** Three foundations came together to provide scholarships to all graduating students.
- A portable **cost-saving program** has had a big impact on the district.
- **Higher Education Outcomes-Based Funding Act (HB 9).** This legislation will allow higher education funding formulas based on degree (4-year institutions) and milestone (2-year institutions) completion. For 2-year colleges, future funding will be based on progression toward student success using the following milestones: completion of remedial education in mathematics or English, completion of first-year college-level mathematics or English, completion of 15 or 30 hours of semester credit, earning a degree or certificate, and transfer to a 4-year institution.

### Michigan

- A new **jobs training program** has structurally repositioned the colleges for economic development. Community colleges are able to create a training pool of resources. In Iowa, they can only issue revenue bonds. In Michigan, they can issue bonds. They can borrow from the reserves, and they also have a “pay as they go” model. But that training pool is paid off by a redirection of the income tax withholding for newly hired workers.
- **Alternate revenue streams.** Having access to lots of land and property for commercial development, the college gets a stream of income from property.
- Commercialization applications are identified for products produced by the college.
- **Differential tuition for higher-cost programs,** determined by looking at the market and adjusting tuition accordingly.

## Washington, DC; Maryland; and Virginia

- A **Re-engineering Budget Dream Team** designs strategies to work with the resources that the colleges have in a much smarter way.
- **Community College Tuition Incentive Program.** A \$5 million pool of resources has been established. If community colleges keep their tuition increases at 3% or less, they have the opportunity to draw from that pool.
- **Employee cross-training.** Employees are trained across functional areas, to maximize resources for student advising.
- **Split budget funding.** By working with the state’s Department of Budget Management, funding for projects allocated across two years. For the last two or three years, every community college that had a project in the pipeline was able to get funding for it.

### Ohio

- The **state’s investment policy** was examined as a way to determine how the college is managing its funds and to increase earnings at a time when colleges need the funds.

### California

- A **grant to develop a “keep fresh” course** allows the unemployed to maintain the sharpness of their skills while waiting to be employed in the nursing field.
- **Putting faculty in cross-sections together** is a way to find great solutions to problems. Pairing teachers from high schools with community college and 4-year faculty addresses issues to bridge that gap and forge a seamless transition for students. Faculty members do not work in silos.
- **The adult basic school targets resources to students at or near transfer level.** Basic skills courses create a long track for students from start to graduation, which affects completion numbers. A large proportion of students in these courses fail to move on. In the past, the community college basic skills program overgrew itself and began to offer many more levels below transfer than needed. The adult basic school addresses the gap. The college can enter into a partnership with the adult school to place students who take the assessment test and are not ready for college-level work in the adult school for remediation. The college can then focus its financial resources on students who are at or near transfer level.

- **Rationing enrollment.** The effect of the state's 5% funding cut to colleges is forcing enrollment caps that are turning students away, a fact that could have long-term economic and social consequences, including higher unemployment and incarceration rates. Students who have not taken their studies seriously are disproportionately affected.

## Big Ideas for the Future of Community Colleges

### Texas

- **Globalization of student learning outcomes.** As colleges continue dealing with budget cuts, programs that are not entirely integrated are usually eliminated.

### Michigan

- Present the institution's budget as a **student success budget**.

### Washington, DC; Maryland; and Virginia

- **3 Plus 1 Over Program.** Some of the institutions' degrees are upside down in the sense that a student can complete nursing and then go to the university and get all the general education to complete a bachelor's degree in nursing. The partner organization has signed an articulation agreement.
- **Traditional ways of looking at college education may not match future need and conditions.** The traditional mode for attendance is full time, on the way to the baccalaureate – get your BA, your BS, or your AA or your AS, with the assumption that jobs exist in these certification areas. This could be wrong, and community colleges need to reexamine more fully and more often.

### Florida

- The goal of the **IBM Watson Project** is to explore ways of using Watson to focus on the way students learn today.

### North Carolina

- **Teaching sustainability** to assist the college with saving money.
- The **Code Green Initiative** incorporates sustainability and green technology into all five technical programs.

### Illinois

- The **first associate degree program in wind turbine technology** was locally funded, along with a training center. Because of the training center, the college was able to partner with the university to get an NSF grant for \$900,000. The goal is to disseminate wind turbine tech training materials nationwide.

### Ohio

- The **RITE board** brings education and industry together to talk about what skills are needed for today and tomorrow.

### California

- There is a need to engage in a deep conversation about **what the community college is** and what its role and mission is. What are community colleges going to be for the next 10 to 20 years? Goals, mission, and needs are very different today, but the colleges are still following the same old models.
- **Offering some baccalaureate programs.** There is a high unemployment rate for associate degree nursing students because of the lack of opportunities. Hospitals are hiring more students who have bachelor's degrees. About 80% of nurses need to have a bachelor's degree because they are playing a more active role in providing care than they did in the past.
- **The economy prevents community colleges from getting ahead of the curve** and is consequently defining the colleges in multiple ways. It is defining when students come in, staffing decisions, and teaching workloads. Since community colleges cannot be everything to everyone, where do we place our priorities, and how do we avoid being reactive instead of proactive?

### Iowa

- **Should community colleges offer 4-year degrees?** Where does AACC see that going? Does AACC have a position on it? Is it a threat or mission change?
- **Pilot program with McGraw-Hill on developmental math.** McGraw-Hill has created software that promises to accelerate students through developmental math. Implementation has begun, and plans are underway to assess problems students have had achieving college-level readiness, to create a lab, and to test student outcomes.

If the program is successful, it will save students and the college time and money.

- **Open-source training.** A staff is located at the trustees' office that is supported by and reports to the presidents of Iowa colleges. This operating team includes representatives from different colleges, such as continuing education deans, economic development people, and marketing staff who identify training needs of companies throughout Iowa. Colleges pay \$5,500 a year, but more revenue is coming back to colleges through this coordinated statewide effort.

## What AACC Can Do for Members

### Texas

- **Assist colleges in improving civic engagement of students in their communities.** Does AACC have a strategy to support the colleges in this area?
- **Assist colleges in connecting high school and community college faculty.** Service learning could be part of a solution in terms of building partnerships between these two groups. Right now it only exists as a sidebar, or just in a small office, but the vision needs to be articulated for how the initiative exists in the community and within the system. Can AACC articulate the role of service learning and civic engagement in the long-term viability of community colleges in their communities?

### Michigan

- **Address barriers** to international student recruitment. Obtaining visas to come to the United States is a challenge and affects how other countries perceive community colleges.
- **Listen to students.** Students need a forum or voice to speak about what might benefit community colleges in the future.

### Washington, DC; Maryland; and Virginia

- **AACC should break away from other elements of higher education** that have different priorities.
- **Trade Adjustment Assistance.** It would be helpful if AACC could influence regulatory policy. When looking at eligibility, it is a very narrow slice. There is a role that the association can play influencing really where the rubber meets the road on some of these big, big pots of grant money.

- **Assess the membership every couple of years.** AACC should be advising members about what is needed from them and how to assist AACC with advocacy. What does AACC expect of its members, and where can they play a greater role? Members should be doing more than just paying dues and laying out their expectations to AACC.
- **True advocacy.** Advocacy is not just about circling the wagons around little discretionary programs.

### Florida

- **Find resources that have buy-in from community colleges.** Support design and development from the standpoint of the colleges' needs rather than going to a lot of vendors that the colleges all do business with, who have designed systems for their own purposes but haven't taken into account the perspective of the community college.
- **Create an evaluation process for the effectiveness of AACC councils and commissions.** There needs to be an annual process for evaluating the work of each of the councils and commissions so that the AACC president gets a report on what actually happened to achieve the results.
- **The relationship between AACC and the Association of Community College Trustees** could be a more collaborative endeavor, as long as policy and procedural lines are not crossed.

### North Carolina

- **Assist with reverse transcripting certification.** For the student to earn credits, there needs to be an easier way for colleges to access proficiency. If a student goes on and gets that industry certification, he or she should be able to count that as a credit based on industry standard.
- **Identify best practices in online learning.** How do colleges maintain the quality and ability to serve when rules and regulations are written that try to stop the degree and diploma mills but also affect community colleges?
- Implement regional **leadership development forums** in the six accrediting regions, focusing more attention on many of the initiatives and issues that AACC is trying to develop through the 21st century.
- **Address competency-based education and the modularization of curriculum.** Should there be national standards of competency? What are the best practices in how colleges articulate credit from noncredit to credit?

How can financial aid and modularized curriculum mesh and work well together?

- **Assist with building the VFA toolbox.** AACC can assist with creating measures so that the data is out there is being captured fairly for everyone.
- **Help legislators understand what community colleges are.**
- **Reengineer the AACC convention** to be more friendly and have more cutting-edge presentations.

## Illinois

- Improve participation in **study abroad programs** that community colleges offer. A national initiative to expand dramatically the proportion of students who could have those kinds of short-term experiences, between 10 to 14 days, could have huge impact.
- **Host leadership training road shows.** Get best practice leaders to go to selected colleges for an intensive engagement of maybe two or three months long, where the vice president is paired with his or her counterpart. The goal is to infuse knowledge and best practices into that institution and do the training on site rather than having the colleges send their people somewhere.
- Build a website similar to the “**Virginia Wizard**,” a website where students can find all they need to know. It includes a cost calculator to compare any of the community colleges in the state with any university, create a two plus two path, and estimate the cost to completion. There is also a rich assortment of career counseling assessments and transfer planning. The site is a clearinghouse in one spot and is very 21st century. Why not have AACC do that same thing on a national level?
- **Tell an effective story about what dual credit is.** Community colleges need a better story told, and AACC can tell the story.

## Ohio

- Develop a “Where’s the Money?” brochure.
- Host a **Governance Institute**, to get trustees involved in the student success discussion.
- **Improve Accessibility.** Nobody at AACC answers the phone, voicemails are not returned, and the staff does not always have the information that a college needs to have.
- **Foster behind-the-scenes relationship-building.** Keeping

other associations, foundations, agencies, and government entities focused on community colleges and steered in a realistic direction. When well-intentioned organizations come forward with a success agenda that they want the colleges to participate in and they create measures of success but may not have experience with us, AACC could keep them grounded.

- **Develop more interactive video conferences.** The webinars are good, but video conferencing may allow for more interactive questioning sessions.
- Help ensure that the **Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation** involves community colleges in their conversations about community colleges. When the foundation is having those conversations with business entities, it catches the colleges off guard when they have not been involved in the process. And the community colleges are not given the opportunity to make sure that the communication is accurate.
- Use student testimonials to attract partnerships with
- businesses.

## California

- **Facilitate more discussion about disability services.** Examples such as a life skills center staffed by doctoral students has helped students with emotional and mental disabilities improve by up to 22%.
- **Identify strategies for addressing the achievement gap between ethnic groups.** Bring together parents, teachers, administrators, and students to formulate strategies for improving teaching methods and student success among multicultural groups. Addressing this gap nationwide is essential to ensuring job placement.
- Engage in a **national conversation about accreditation** and how it affects graduation.
- With the federal government requesting more data and components, AACC needs to lead the conversation about **data collection and reporting.** This is a time-consuming task for colleges, and it is unclear how collecting and reporting data relate to accountability.
- Help colleges advocate in this age of accountability
- to ensure that **student equity measures are part of the measures of success.**
- **Establish a national database of promising practices and programs.**

- **The open door is closing, and AACC needs to help colleges keep it open.**

#### Iowa

- **Support the Workforce Investment Act.** Funds have been cut by about 70% since the 1990s. Iowa community colleges have trained tens of thousands of displaced workers in the 40–65 age range. Who is going to retrain those workers? Are policies going to be developed? Is the federal government zeroing out funding? Turnover will continue as more plants close.
- Identify **statewide proposals for performance-based funding** that are best practices or good models before state-defined measures are imposed on the community colleges in the state.

## Moving Forward With Phase 2

The 38-member 21st-Century Commission on the Future of Community Colleges comprises nationally prominent co-chairs; community college leaders of note; key representatives from other educational sectors; and influential voices from business, philanthropy, policy making, and contemporary thought. All have interest in and knowledge of community colleges, but some will be friendly critics. All have in-depth understanding of the educational issues facing the nation and a history of speaking with candor and thoughtfulness. This final Listening Tour report will inform their deliberations, but the core work of creating a vision will come from yet another round of courageous conversations, this time at the national level.

Four commission meetings have been scheduled to occur between April 2011 and January 2012: two day-long meetings in Washington, DC, and another two via teleconference. At their conclusion, during February, March, and early April 2012, the commission's final report will be completed for presentation and distribution at AACC's 2012 annual convention, April 21–24, in Orlando, Florida. At that time, AACC leaders and the national commission will address the convention and news media and will begin to schedule editorial meetings to push yet another round of courageous conversations into the public arena. The final report of the 21st-Century Commission will become a landmark document, offering practitioners a road map for the next era of change.

Through a systematic communications strategy involving both traditional media and social networking technologies, AACC will connect stakeholders within and beyond the community college field in discussion of issues and strategies highlighted by the commission. With a strong dual emphasis on truth-telling and results, the strategy will focus on building broad engagement around the community college completion agenda and on sharing evidence-based practices that can be brought to scale.

## References

- Commission on the Future of the Community College. (1988). *Building communities: A vision for a new century*. Washington, DC: American Association of Community and Junior Colleges.
- President's Commission on Higher Education. (1947). *Higher education for American democracy: A report of the President's Commission on Higher Education* (vols. 1–6). New York: Harper.