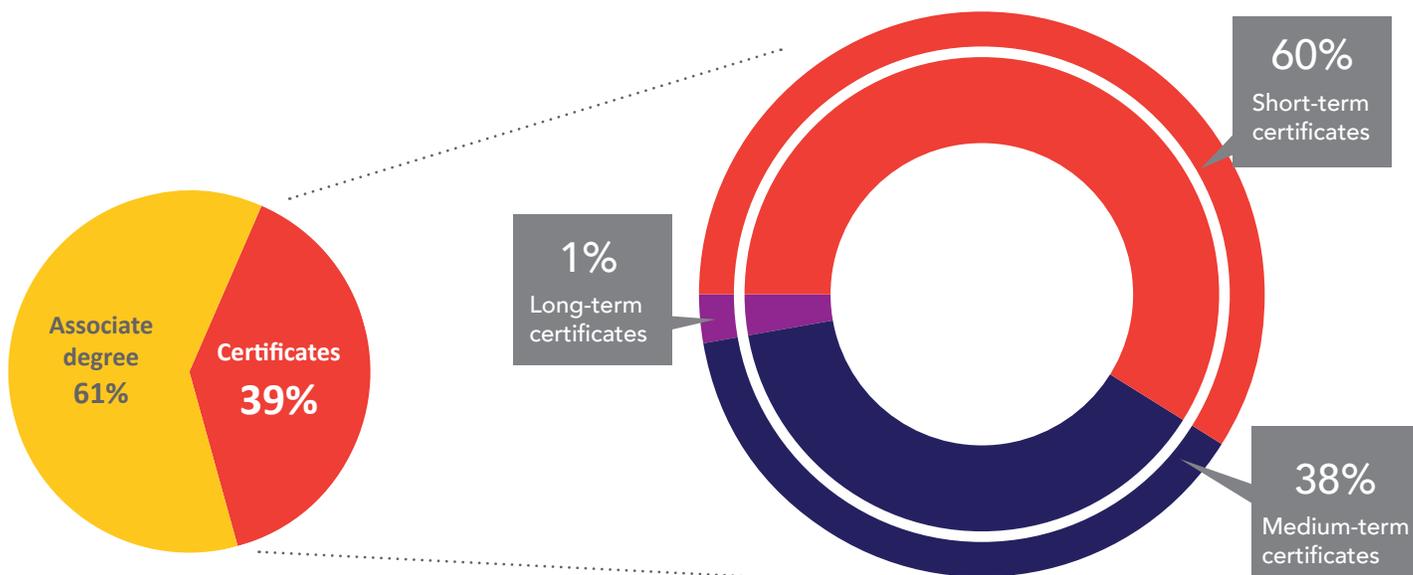# Boom in certificates

Between 2000 and 2014, the number of certificates awarded at community colleges increased by 236 percent.

Certificates awarded at community colleges: 2014

Associate degree 61%

Certificates **39%**

1% Long-term certificates

60% Short-term certificates

38% Medium-term certificates

*Does not add up to 100% due to rounding.

Source: AACC analysis of Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) 2014 Completion data file, U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics.
Carnevale A.P., Rose, S.J. & Hanson, A.R. (2012), "Certificates: Gateway to Gainful Employment and College Degrees," Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce

AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF COMMUNITY COLLEGES

According to IPEDS, short-term certificates include awards for programs that are less than one academic year; medium-term certificates are programs that are at least one year, but less than two academic years; and long-term certificates are awards for at least two years, but less than four academic years.

Sixty one percent of the 1.2 million credentials that community colleges awarded in 2014 were associate degrees and 39 percent were certificates. Most of the latter were short-term certificates (60 percent); 38 percent were medium-term; and 1 percent were long-term certificates. Short-term certificates grew by 236 percent and medium-term certificates increased by 101 percent between 2000 and 2014. Community colleges confer substantially more certificates than any other sector of higher education. They have become a stepping stone for many students to earn occupationally focused credentials, prepare for further education or to retrain workers who already have postsecondary credentials. Certificates are cost effective and often lead to middle-class jobs, with some of those occupations paying more than jobs requiring college degrees.

For more information, contact Kent Phillippe, associate vice president for research and student success at the American Association of Community Colleges, at (202) 416-4505 or kphillippe@aacc.nche.edu, or Rahel Tekle, AACC research associate, at (202) 416-4508 or rtekle@aacc.nche.edu.