



Community Colleges Must Be *Resilient by Design*

COMMUNITY PARTNERS DISCUSSION TOOLKIT

Business as Usual No Longer Works. Plan for a Future of Change.



COMMUNITY PARTNERS DISCUSSION GUIDE

It is likely that no college, no matter how healthy it currently may be, can continue to operate with business as usual; all will be pressured to adapt or risk becoming irrelevant or insolvent. Even further, these changes will take place at a faster pace than what colleges are used to, requiring rapid and ongoing adaptation.

This reality may seem daunting, but all of these factors also present an opportunity for community colleges to recommit themselves to rapid responsiveness in alignment with the public's ever-changing needs. In doing so, they can respond in a way that doubles down on the traditional mission of community colleges to propel economic mobility and growth for individuals and communities, and to help lay the foundation for civic society.

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CONTENTS

Why Community Colleges Are Planning for a Future of Change_____	3
Identifying Community Partners and Understanding Their Essential Role_____	4
Key Points From the <i>Resilient by Design</i> Report_____	6
Making the Most of This Discussion Guide_____	8
Meeting Workforce Needs ... Even as They Regularly Change_____	10
Managing Enrollment ... Amidst Shifting Student Demographics_____	14
Meeting Student Needs ... Even as Needs Grow and Evolve_____	18
Using Advancing Technologies ... for Colleges and Students_____	22
Reimagining Teaching ... and Ensuring That Students Learn Relevant Skills_____	26
Using Data in New Ways ... to Improve Colleges' Work and Prove Colleges' Worth_____	29

Why Community Colleges Are Planning for a Future of Change

The next decade will present pivotal moments for community colleges. While individual colleges and the field as a whole have made critical improvements, the accelerating pace of change — in the labor market, the economy, student demographics, and other forces — means that colleges will continually face both familiar and new challenges.

These challenges will be widespread and disruptive enough that broader and deeper partnerships with employers, K–12 districts, universities, and community organizations will be increasingly critical.

The report *Resilient by Design* identifies the forces that will shape higher education as the pace of change accelerates and the magnitude of change increases. It was prepared by the National Center for Higher Education Management Systems (NCHEMS) on behalf of the American Association of Community Colleges (AACC).

As *Resilient by Design* explains, colleges and their community partners must begin planning for a future that will be quite different from the present. More important, conditions will continue to evolve and present fresh challenges — even as expectations for accountability to both students and taxpayers rise.

This new future demands that colleges and their community partners develop processes for evaluating, discussing, and rethinking the college’s policies, practices, priorities, and performance. It compels colleges and their partners to plan for change while ensuring a quality learning experience for all students. Most of all, it requires everyone in the college/community ecosystem to think strategically about how to best use their resources — time, money, and talent — to meet shared missions for educational attainment, community vitality, economic growth, and human service in a rapidly shifting future.

[Download](#) and read the *Resilient by Design* report.

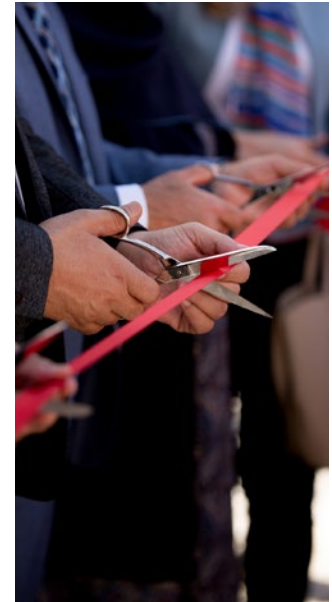


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Identifying Community Partners and Understanding Their Essential Role

The community college is having internal conversations at all levels — leaders, faculty, staff, and governing boards — about *Resilient by Design* and its implications for the future. Now it is time for the college to have these conversations with you.

The community college mission is grounded in serving generations of residents, many of whom have unmet academic and nonacademic needs. Community partners are essential to this work. After all, colleges and their community partners have mutual goals for economic development, a shared need for improved educational attainment, and common concerns about responding effectively and efficiently to human needs. Moreover, the changes that will disrupt business as usual for community colleges are also likely to affect businesses, K–12 districts, nonprofits, local governments, universities, and other community stakeholders.



WHO ARE COMMUNITY PARTNERS?

Community partners include all organizations committed to helping residents, including community college students, attain their academic, career, and life goals. Because community colleges are central to this work, these organizations also have a stake in promoting the viability and vitality of community colleges themselves. Community partners include:

EDUCATION SECTOR

- K–12 schools and school districts
- Other community colleges
- Public and private baccalaureate-granting colleges and universities

BUSINESS SECTOR

- Chambers of commerce
- Economic development organizations
- Employers of all sizes, from small businesses to multinational corporations
- Trade associations

NONPROFITS, COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS, AND GOVERNMENT ORGANIZATIONS

- Advocacy groups
- Community job training programs
- Libraries
- Literacy and adult education groups
- Organizations and government agencies that provide basic needs support, health care, and social services
- Prisons and organizations serving people who have been involved in the justice system
- Tribal governments
- Unions
- Veterans affairs agencies and organizations
- Workforce development organizations

Identifying Community Partners and Understanding Their Essential Role

Teamwork will become even more important in the coming decade as economics and demographics evolve. More than ever, the work of colleges and their community partners will be intertwined. And more than ever, the goals of community organizations will be served by ensuring the success of community colleges. To meet future challenges, colleges and their community partners will need stronger, more enduring, and more resilient collaborations.

Your college needs you to have honest conversations about community needs and how best to fulfill them. To better serve communities in the rapidly changing future, colleges and community partners must evaluate and re-visit how they work together.

These conversations can help various stakeholders identify the common challenges that will affect their work and the community overall — and figure out how to confront them together. Success in these efforts will almost certainly require partnerships that look different from the partnerships of the past.

A new approach to collaboration will require beginning new dialogues rather than simply continuing existing conversations. Community partners should be friendly critics — or even outright critics — of current policies, practices, and procedures. And then colleges need community partners' participation in the ever-broadening work of preparing students to earn a living wage and contribute to their communities.



Key Points From the *Resilient by Design* Report

The coming years will see unprecedented change on several dimensions that are critical to community colleges' success in continuing to power American economic prosperity and societal health.



FORCES AFFECTING COMMUNITY COLLEGES

- Enrollment declines and changing student audiences
- Financial pressures
- Workforce needs
- Student needs and expectations
- Intensifying competition
- Supporting communities
- Advancing technologies

IMPLICATIONS FOR COMMUNITY COLLEGES

- Measuring success and demonstrating value
- Community-scale impacts
- Meeting employer needs and expectations
- Meeting student needs and expectations
- Teaching and learning
- The business model

Resilient by Design identifies seven forces that will affect the way colleges operate, fund their work, and serve their students and communities. It then discusses six categories of implications for colleges as these forces shape the future.

These forces will affect entire communities, not just community colleges. The report is clear that if communities are to thrive in this emerging future, community partners will need to work with colleges and support them as they:

- ▶ Unabashedly demonstrate their value with quantitative data. Colleges need to show that they generate a positive return on investment for individual students and taxpayers and that they improve their communities. Demonstrating these impacts will require new ways of measuring student success, including post-graduation outcomes.
- ▶ Adapt their curricula to meet workforce needs with speed and through more systematic involvement from employers.
- ▶ Develop more symbiotic relationships with employers that lead to hands-on workplace learning embedded in programs.
- ▶ Prioritize the needs of the emerging student populations and adjust their approaches accordingly.
- ▶ Adopt new ways of teaching and learning.
- ▶ Add short-term credentials that are tailored for an economy that requires regular reskilling or upskilling while simultaneously eliminating barriers between noncredit and credit programs.
- ▶ Ensure that graduates are prepared for employment at living-wage jobs or for seamless transfer to baccalaureate and graduate programs that lead to living-wage jobs.
- ▶ Evolve their business models to maintain financial sustainability in the midst of changing revenue and expenses.
- ▶ Collaborate with one another — and community partners — to ensure the availability and affordability of relevant programs.

Throughout the report and this guide, the need for implementing these ideas is explained more fully, and the discussion questions provide opportunities to explore how community partners can work with colleges in planning strategically for the future.

Completion and Transfer Remain Key Goals

Resilient by Design calls on community colleges to more openly embrace their responsibility for ensuring living-wage employment opportunities, and it notes that this work should include creating more shorter-term credentials. Yet data indicate that the baccalaureate degree remains a significant milestone for upward mobility. Thus, college completion, transfer, and preparing students for living-wage jobs continue to be core goals for community colleges.

As the future unfolds, colleges and community partners should keep these observations in mind:

- ▶ **The traditional approach to education and careers is outdated.** A student's educational journey no longer proceeds directly from high school to a community college, then perhaps a university, culminating with a job. Instead, students compile learning from many online and in-person sources — including multiple providers, a mix of credit and noncredit programming, and internships and co-ops — simultaneously. Moreover, the rapidly changing nature of work will require everyone to be lifelong learners; even those who possess bachelor's and graduate degrees will need additional education and upskilling from time to time throughout their careers.
- ▶ **Guided pathways continue to be essential.** Students are more likely to complete a degree or credential when they pick a program early, create an academic plan, and have a clear course roadmap. With ongoing support, students can stay on track to meeting their own goals. This approach is called *guided pathways* and is often shortened to *educational pathways* or simply *pathways*. Colleges can work with community partners to focus on how students set their end goals and create structures that keep students on track to reach those goals.
- ▶ **Jobs that provide living wages must be a clear priority.** Colleges will need to ensure that every student has a clear roadmap to well-paying jobs and a career related to their chosen program of study. The pathway should lead to whatever credential is required to meet the student's goals.
- ▶ **Simplifying transfer is critical.** Transfer must be straightforward, penalty free, and guaranteed.

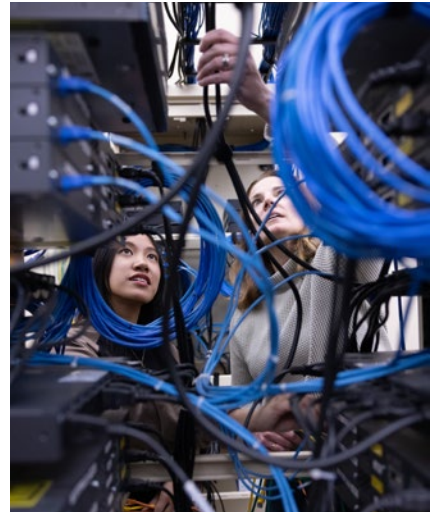


Photo by Allison Shelley/Complete College Photo Library

Making the Most of This Discussion Guide

Community colleges — and the communities they serve — face an uncertain and rapidly changing future that will require resilience from colleges, their students, and their community partners. *Resilient by Design* details future changes and suggests how community colleges might best position themselves for that changing future.

Many of the challenges community colleges will face are deeply connected to the community's health and vitality. The questions in this discussion guide will help colleges and their community partners plan strategically and develop new kinds of collaborations. Together, colleges and their community partners can find new ways to advance their shared goals and serve their shared constituents.



Each section addresses a central theme of the report. All of the themes are interconnected because all of the work at a college is interconnected. The themes are:

- ▶ Meeting Workforce Needs ... Even as They Regularly Change;
- ▶ Managing Enrollment ... Amidst Shifting Student Demographics;
- ▶ Meeting Student Needs ... Even as Needs Grow and Evolve;
- ▶ Using Advancing Technologies ... for Colleges and Students;
- ▶ Reimagining Teaching ... and Ensuring That Students Learn Relevant Skills; and
- ▶ Using Data in New Ways ... to Improve Colleges' Work and Prove Colleges' Worth.

The questions are designed to inspire strategic thinking, and your answers may involve large-scale change that requires the involvement of multiple community stakeholders. While your conversation probably will not address every theme, think about how changes in the area you are discussing will affect — or ultimately lead to additional changes in — other areas. Thus, while examining themes separately is practical, bear in mind how the changes you identify will be part of a greater whole.

Most important, consider how your partnerships with community colleges can prepare for a future that serves the community at large, advances your goals, and helps colleges better serve their students.

In support of these objectives, how might colleges in your area think about:

- ▶ Adapting approaches to teaching?
- ▶ Changing or expanding support services?
- ▶ Expanding the college's capacity to collect, assess, and use data?

Making the Most of This Discussion Guide

- ▶ Collaborating with all community stakeholders?
- ▶ Changing budgeting?
- ▶ Adjusting business models?
- ▶ Maintaining quality as practices and processes evolve?

NOTE: Your conversation facilitator will tell you which section(s) of this guide your discussion will cover. Your discussion may not include all of the questions in this guide, but it should always include questions that have this arrow ▶ symbol.



Photo by Allison Shelley/Complete College Photo Library

MEETING WORKFORCE NEEDS ... Even as They Regularly Change

Relevant pages of *Resilient by Design*:

- 20–22
- 35–38

Workforce development through education is at the core of what community colleges are expected to do, and they must do it well. Employers and regions depend on community colleges to equip students with skills that enable them to meet workforce needs. More than ever, employers and regions need individuals who can meet immediate labor market needs and also be prepared to adapt as skills and jobs evolve.

Thus, colleges must teach students both short-term and long-term work-relevant skills. They must prepare students to step into a living-wage job immediately upon graduation and equip them with foundational skills such as teamwork, communication, problem-solving, and entrepreneurial thinking that will serve them well even as technology shifts and as they change careers.



Photo by Allison Shelley/Complete College Photo Library

While data indicate that the baccalaureate degree remains a significant milestone for upward mobility, both employer and student needs are changing.

- ▶ More employers are moving toward skills-based hiring at the same time that the pace at which technology is altering those skills accelerates. Colleges will be expected to keep up with the speed of industry.
- ▶ Employers need college partners that are ready to provide the specific education and training that will allow current employees — including those with college degrees — to update their skills or advance their careers.
- ▶ Driven especially by adult learners, student demand is increasingly moving toward credentials that are highly connected to the workplace and can be completed more quickly and at a lower cost than traditional degrees.
- ▶ Colleges need to provide all students with up-to-date, marketable skills as well as instill the ability to continuously learn and adapt.
- ▶ Technology, including but not limited to artificial intelligence (AI), is rapidly evolving, which means employers constantly need new skills from their workforce. Some occupations are changing, while others are disappearing or emerging.
- ▶ Even beyond AI-specific skills, the fast-moving and sweeping changes mean that colleges will need to prepare students for future workplaces that are different from the ones of today in unknown ways. Students will need to enter the workplace with durable skills that allow them to adapt as their tasks change within a particular job, as entire occupations disappear, and as new opportunities are created.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

EDUCATION SECTOR

- ▶ **What most resonated with you from the relevant sections of the report? How will the findings affect your work? How will the findings affect your students and your employees?**

How can you help the college better integrate a meaningful work-based component into every learning experience?

- » How can you work with the college to think through curriculum and course changes that better incorporate work-based learning into every course so students regularly apply what they have learned in the classroom to practical job situations?
- » Is your K–12 system or university also trying to incorporate more work-based learning? How would more work-based learning at the community college affect your work and your relationship with the college?
- » How can you work with the college to add milestones in the transfer curriculum so even if a student does not complete their degree, they still have marketable skills and a credential?
- » Are there practical learning opportunities you can offer to community college students?

What workplace skills are most important for the college to integrate into general education?

How can schools and community colleges work together to ensure that all K–12 students have solid career exploration experience and that dual enrollment courses define a clear pathway to student goal completion?

What ideas can you offer to help the college and other community partners build students' resilience so they are prepared not just for the jobs that exist currently but also for inevitable transitions to jobs that do not yet exist?

- ▶ **What data about the regional labor market — for example, what a livable wage is, available jobs, salaries, or requisite educational attainment levels — should be available and shared across the education sector and with students?**

BUSINESS SECTOR

- ▶ **What most resonated with you from the relevant sections of the report? How will the findings affect your work? How will the findings affect your customers and employees?**
- ▶ **How can employers work together to support the community college in anticipating and responding to future workforce needs?**

MEETING WORKFORCE NEEDS ... Even as They Regularly Change

How can your company be a partner in educating and training students?

- » Can you help identify the skills the college should teach?
- » Can you help define educational outcomes and curriculum changes that will produce the outcomes you want?
- » Can you offer ideas about building students' *resilience* so they are prepared not just for the jobs that exist currently but also for the inevitable transitions to jobs that do not yet exist?
- » Can you lend instructors, facilities, or equipment to your community college partner(s) with the goal of improving the workplace relevance of their educational offerings and ensuring that graduates will be excellent employees?

How can you help the college ensure that students – throughout their college education – have workplace experiences that are relevant to your company?

- » Can you help identify ways that students can practice applying their knowledge and skills in real-world situations that are relevant to their future jobs and careers?
- » Are there practical learning opportunities you can offer to community college students? For example, can you provide internships or apprenticeships?
- » How can you help the college think through curriculum and course changes that better incorporate work-based learning into every course so students regularly apply what they have learned in the classroom to practical job situations?

What workplace skills are most important for the college to integrate into general education courses, such as English, history, or biology?

How can the community college help provide skills training to your current and future employees?

- » Does it make sense for the college to offer on-site training? If so, can some classes be open to individuals who are not current employees?
- » Can the college work with you to explain the value of additional training to your employees?
- » How can your college partner(s) help you build career promotion ladders for your employees?

▶ What data about the regional labor market – for example, what a livable wage is, available jobs, salaries, or requisite educational attainment levels – should be available and shared across the business sector and with students?

How can you partner with the community college so you know students by the time they graduate and they can smoothly transition from school to work? Are there ways you can change your hiring practices – such as engaging with students throughout their education – so there will be a greater number of certain jobs for graduates and more highly qualified employees for you?

NONPROFITS, COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS, AND GOVERNMENT ORGANIZATIONS

- ▶ **What most resonated with you from the relevant sections of the report? How will the findings affect your work? How will the findings affect the people you serve — customers, clients, or constituents — and your employees?**

How does your service to the community overlap with the needs of college students? How can you collaborate with the community college to ensure that you are carrying out your mission and meeting college student needs at the same time?

» How can you and the college create efficiencies and avoid duplicating efforts?

How can you help the college better integrate a meaningful work-based component into every learning experience?

» Are there practical learning opportunities you can offer to community college students?

» How can you help the college think through curriculum and course changes that better incorporate work-based learning into every course so students regularly apply what they have learned in the classroom to practical job situations?

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- ▶ **Who else in the community can help address the issues you have discussed?**
 - ▶ **Are you aware of current policies, practices, or priorities — in your sector or elsewhere — that will create barriers to making the kinds of changes that need to happen?**
 - ▶ **What data about the regional labor market — for example, what a livable wage is, available jobs, salaries, or requisite educational attainment levels — should be available and shared across your sector and with students?**
 - ▶ **What data do you need to better understand this topic?**

MANAGING ENROLLMENT ... Amidst Shifting Student Demographics

Relevant pages of *Resilient by Design*:

- 14–17
- 41–42

The decline in the number of traditional-age students has long been predicted and is starting to affect all of higher education.

High schools nationally have begun (or are about to begin) producing fewer graduates. The nation's high school class of 2041 will be nearly half a million students smaller than the 2025 graduating class. The specific timing varies by state and region, but this national trend ultimately will affect every state.

Compounding the decrease in high school graduates is a decline in college-going rates.

Between 2015 and 2022, the percentage of high school graduates who enrolled directly in college across all sectors fell — even though the number of high school graduates mostly grew during this period.

Because the direct-from-high-school population serves as the most predictable source of enrollment for most colleges, including community colleges, these changes will significantly affect how community colleges recruit and serve students. Colleges will have to either shrink or find new student audiences, most notably by increasing the number of adult and dual enrollment students. In fact, the number of U.S. adults — people aged 25 to 44 — who hold a high school diploma but no college credit has increased.

Colleges and communities would benefit if colleges enrolled more students aged 25 to 44. While this age group is not the only one projected to grow substantially, helping these individuals acquire certificates, degrees, or new skills will ensure that they are better equipped to productively address communities' workforce needs. Educating students in this age group would also lead to having more residents who are prepared to contribute to their communities and fewer residents who need ongoing support to meet their basic needs.

The needs of students aged 25 to 44, however, are dissimilar to those of traditional-age students in many important respects. For example, adult learners often seek credentials that are highly connected to the workplace and can be completed more quickly and at a lower cost than traditional degrees.



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

EDUCATION SECTOR

- ▶ **What most resonated with you from the relevant sections of the report? How will the findings affect your work? How will the findings affect your students and your employees?**

How will the demographics for the region change in the coming years, and how will those changes affect the number and types of students throughout the education pipeline?

- » What impact will these demographic changes have on your institution, and what do these changes mean for your relationship with the community college?
- » What students should the community college be serving?
- » How can the entire higher education ecosystem work together to prove the value of its offerings to students in the new demographics you will need to serve?
- » How can you partner with the community college to ensure that students can successfully transfer credits to other institutions in ways that apply to their chosen academic program?

How can the college collaborate with you to build a college-going culture starting with the youngest students in the region?

How can the community college be a presence at your school, college, or university? Should the community college have an office at your institution or vice versa?

How can you and the college work together to get more adult learners onto educational pathways that lead to living-wage jobs?

How should the college change its structures, services, and curriculum to attract and meet the needs of future students?

- » What types of career-connected educational experiences should the college offer?
- » How can you help the college ensure that dual enrollment students get on — and stay on — a pathway that leads to certificates, degrees, and living-wage jobs?
- » What services are future students more likely to need? For example, older students and students who are upskilling are more likely to need child care and services outside of traditional business hours. What impact will these needs have on your institution, and how might a partnership with the community college help you both provide critical services? Will any services become less important?

- ▶ **Who else in the community can help address the issues you have discussed?**

- ▶ **Are you aware of current policies, practices, or priorities — in your sector or elsewhere — that will create barriers to making the kinds of changes that need to happen?**

- ▶ **What data do you need to better understand this topic?**

BUSINESS SECTOR

- ▶ **What most resonated with you from the relevant sections of the report? How will the findings affect your work? How will the findings affect your customers, employees, and business organizations?**

How will the demographics for the region change in the coming years? How will these changes affect the pipeline of talent you rely on, how will your business need to adapt based on these changes, and how will these changes affect your relationship with the college?

How can you and the college work together to get more adult learners onto educational pathways that lead to living-wage jobs?

How should the college change its structures, services, and curriculum to attract and meet the needs of future students?

- » What types of career-connected educational experiences should the college offer? How can you partner with the college to help design or provide those experiences?
- » How might the college coordinate schedules with your business so employees can work and attend college at the same time — and do so in a reasonable number of hours per day?

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- ▶ **Who else in the community can help address the issues you have discussed?**

 - ▶ **Are you aware of current policies, practices, or priorities — in your sector or elsewhere — that will create barriers to making the kinds of changes that need to happen?**

 - ▶ **What data do you need to better understand this topic?**

NONPROFITS, COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS, AND GOVERNMENT ORGANIZATIONS

- ▶ **What most resonated with you from the relevant sections of the report? How will the findings affect your work? How will the findings affect the people you serve — customers, clients, or constituents — and your employees?**

How will the demographics for the region change in the coming years, and how will those changes affect the community?

- » What impact will these demographic changes have on your organization, and how will these changes affect your relationship with the community college?

How can the college collaborate with you to build a college-going culture among the people you serve?

How can you and the college work together to get more adult learners onto educational pathways that lead to living-wage jobs?

How should the college change its structures, services, and curriculum to attract and meet the needs of future students?

How can you and the college work together to ensure that students get the services they need? Should the college provide space for community agencies to work with students on its campus?

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- ▶ **Who else in the community can help address the issues you have discussed?**

- ▶ **Are you aware of current policies, practices, or priorities — in your sector or elsewhere — that will create barriers to making the kinds of changes that need to happen?**

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- ▶ **What data do you need to better understand this topic?**

MEETING STUDENT NEEDS ... Even as Needs Grow and Evolve

Relevant pages of *Resilient by Design*:

- 22–24
- 38–44

More than ever, students arriving at the nation’s community colleges bring academic and nonacademic needs that must be met as a prerequisite for learning and success. Many students did not receive the preparation they needed before they arrived at community college, and now students also must make up for academic losses sustained during and after the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition, increasing numbers of students arrive at college with food or housing insecurity and needs for child care, mental health care, transportation, and internet access.

Communities and regions benefit from having a more educated and work-ready population. It is in everyone’s interest to have more residents who are prepared for living-wage jobs and fewer residents who need ongoing support to meet their basic needs.

Thus, colleges and communities must do a better job of meeting the needs of current students as well as preparing for the needs of future student populations. For example, serving more adults will mean more students needing child care, and serving more new Americans will mean more students needing English language instruction and translation services.



Photo by Allison Shelley/Complete College Photo Library

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

EDUCATION SECTOR

- ▶ **What most resonated with you from the relevant sections of the report? How will the findings affect your work? How will the findings affect your students and your employees?**

What barriers are stopping students along the education pipeline?

- » How can you partner with the community college to jointly expand services to meet students' basic needs (e.g., food, housing, mental health care, child care, transportation, and technology)?
- » How can you partner with the community college on curriculum and pedagogy so students are academically well prepared at each stage of their education?

In a future with constrained resources, how can you and the college work together to maintain the social safety net? What approaches will help serve more students and avoid duplicating efforts?

What infrastructure changes are necessary to meet future needs? For example, does the community need more housing, better transportation, affordable child care, or better internet access? What else?

How can the community college help you do your job better? For example, does it make sense for your college or university to have an office on the community college campus?

How can you collaborate with the community college on grant proposals?

- ▶ **Who else in the community can help address the issues you have discussed?**
- ▶ **Are you aware of current policies, practices, or priorities — in your sector or elsewhere — that will create barriers to making the kinds of changes that need to happen?**
- ▶ **What data do you need to better understand this topic?**

BUSINESS SECTOR

- ▶ **What most resonated with you from the relevant sections of the report? How will the findings affect your work? How will the findings affect your customers and employees?**

What is the best way to provide support structures, such as mentoring or career coaching, to students, interns, or apprentices in your work environments? Are those services you can provide?

What infrastructure changes are necessary to meet future needs? For example, does the community need more housing, better transportation, affordable child care, or better internet access? What else?

- ▶ **Who else in the community can help address the issues you have discussed?**
- ▶ **Are you aware of current policies, practices, or priorities — in your sector or elsewhere — that will create barriers to making the kinds of changes that need to happen?**
- ▶ **What data do you need to better understand this topic?**

NONPROFITS, COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS, AND GOVERNMENT ORGANIZATIONS

- ▶ **What most resonated with you from the relevant sections of the report? How will the findings affect your work? How will the findings affect the people you serve — customers, clients, or constituents — and your employees?**

What barriers are keeping current community college students from graduating?

- » How can you help the community college expand services to meet students' basic needs (e.g., food, housing, mental health care, child care, transportation, and technology)?

What barriers are keeping prospective community college students from enrolling? How can you help the community college remove these barriers?

In a future with constrained resources, how can you work with the college to maintain the social safety net? What approaches will help serve more students and avoid duplicating efforts?

What is the best way to provide support structures, such as mentoring or career coaching, to students, interns, or apprentices in your work environments? Are those services you can provide?

What infrastructure changes are necessary to meet future needs? For example, does the community need more housing, better transportation, affordable child care, or better internet access? What else?



MEETING STUDENT NEEDS ... Even as Needs Grow and Evolve

- ▶ **What pain points (e.g., food insecurity, housing insecurity, and mental health needs) are you seeing in the community? How can your organization and the community college work together to address them?**

- ▶ **Who else in the community can help address the issues you have discussed?**

- ▶ **Are you aware of current policies, practices, or priorities — in your sector or elsewhere — that will create barriers to making the kinds of changes that need to happen?**

- ▶ **What data do you need to better understand this topic?**



USING ADVANCING TECHNOLOGIES ... for Colleges and Students

Relevant pages of
Resilient by Design:
• 26–30

New technologies not only will change the content of education, but they will also affect how teaching and learning occur, require costly maintenance and upgrades to keep programs relevant, and change the nature of instructional and administrative work. Artificial intelligence (AI) is changing the workplace as well as the classroom, and it is expected to have an impact at least as great as the introduction of the internet. But AI is only one example. Pressures to constantly adapt are also growing for more mundane technology needs such as lab equipment, software platforms and licenses, and classroom supports.

Every advance in technology changes the workplace and the ways colleges must prepare students. These changes introduce new skills for students to master, create new professional development requirements for colleges' faculty and staff, and impose costs for that professional development or for equipment or software licenses. Advances in technology also reshape college operations.

Clearly, community colleges will need to prepare students with work-relevant AI skills and the understanding that their skills will have to evolve throughout their careers.

AI also has implications for pedagogy and learning. Institutional cultures will need to evolve from viewing AI primarily as an issue of academic integrity to one in which AI is a tool to be used beneficially in all academic programs. For example, colleges will have to expand their focus from policing academic integrity in student work to effectively engineering AI prompts and improving AI-written documents. Coursework also will change. For example, instead of teaching students computer coding, colleges will start teaching them how to prompt AI to produce code.

Overall, instruction will need to put less emphasis on knowing specific content and more on teaching students how to find and validate content; the emphasis will move from the product to the process. AI will infiltrate all corners of the collegiate curriculum, from operating machinery in advanced manufacturing to considering the ethical dimensions of AI's use in the humanities and social sciences to assisting with diagnoses in clinical settings.

AI will also reshape college operations as new tools emerge that hold promise for improving efficiency or services. Some new tools also may power new ways to drive student success. These changes may create new challenges for human resources and for institutional culture. They also raise questions about scale: Can individual institutions — even relatively large ones — adopt AI technologies that contribute to improvements in student outcomes or make college more affordable? And can they do so at a scale that keeps pace with competing, often national, providers?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

EDUCATION SECTOR

- ▶ **What most resonated with you from the relevant sections of the report? How will the findings affect your work? How will the findings affect your students and your employees?**

How can you and the community college work together to update curriculum in light of new technology?

- » Can you identify the skills students will need?
- » Can you recommend ways that the college can teach the essential critical-thinking skills students will need to validate content as technology evolves?
- » Can you collaborate with the college to embed key technology-related skills, such as the use of AI, in coursework?
- » Can you offer support to give students access to the technology they must become comfortable using?

How can you and the community college work together to build technology infrastructure wisely and sustainably?

- » Can you collaborate with the college to responsibly acquire and make the best use of new technologies, including AI? For example, would you consider making joint technology purchases; conducting shared faculty/employee training; or aligning policies related to academic integrity, the ethical use of AI, and other issues related to changing technology?
- » Can you offer the college expertise to address AI and other changing technologies — both to serve students and to improve the college's infrastructure?

What community infrastructure changes are necessary to meet future needs? For example, does the community need better internet access? What else?

- ▶ **Who else in the community can help address the issues you have discussed?**
- ▶ **Are you aware of current policies, practices, or priorities — in your sector or elsewhere — that will create barriers to making the kinds of changes that need to happen?**
- ▶ **What data do you need to better understand this topic?**

BUSINESS SECTOR

- ▶ **What most resonated with you from the relevant sections of the report? How will the findings affect your work? How will the findings affect your customers and employees?**

How can you help the community college update its curriculum in light of new technology?

- » Can you identify the skills students will need?
- » Can you recommend ways that the college can teach the essential critical-thinking skills students will need to validate content as technology evolves?
- » Can you offer support to help colleges embed key technology-related skills, such as the use of AI, in coursework?
- » Can you offer support to give students access to the technology they must become comfortable using?

How can you help the community college build its technology infrastructure wisely and sustainably?

- » Can you collaborate with the college to responsibly acquire and make the best use of new technologies, including AI?
- » Can you offer the college expertise to address AI and other changing technologies — both to serve students and to improve the college's infrastructure?

What community infrastructure changes are necessary to meet future needs? For example, does the community need better internet access? What else?

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- ▶ **Who else in the community can help address the issues you have discussed?**
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- ▶ **Are you aware of current policies, practices, or priorities — in your sector or elsewhere — that will create barriers to making the kinds of changes that need to happen?**
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- ▶ **What data do you need to better understand this topic?**

NONPROFITS, COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS, AND GOVERNMENT ORGANIZATIONS

- ▶ **What most resonated with you from the relevant sections of the report? How will the findings affect your work? How will the findings affect the people you serve — customers, clients, or constituents — and your employees?**

How might you work with the community college to address the challenges of new technologies? For example, might you collaborate on providing training or professional development to college employees, acquiring or sharing technology, improving community access, or developing curriculum changes?

What community infrastructure changes are necessary to meet future needs? For example, does the community need better internet access? What else?

- ▶ **Who else in the community can help address the issues you have discussed?**
- ▶ **Are you aware of current policies, practices, or priorities — in your sector or elsewhere — that will create barriers to making the kinds of changes that need to happen?**
- ▶ **What data do you need to better understand this topic?**

REIMAGINING TEACHING ... and Ensuring That Students Learn Relevant Skills

Relevant pages of *Resilient by Design*:

- 44–52

As community colleges evolve to meet future needs, types of instruction and modes for delivery are both likely to change. In fact, most issues raised in this discussion guide — in particular changing workforce needs, shifting student demographics, and advancing technologies — dovetail with teaching and curriculum changes.

As community partners assist colleges in reimagining teaching, they should consider the issues raised in other sections of this guide as well as the bullets that follow.

Colleges and community partners should consider, as appropriate, the following issues:

- ▶ Ensuring that the quality of instruction, whatever form it takes, is high.
- ▶ Redesigning general education so the skills it teaches are clearly articulated and embedded in program-specific and career-technical coursework. This approach helps students get to their career-focused coursework more quickly and can shorten time to degree, while ensuring that students learn the general education skills — critical thinking, problem-solving, teamwork, and communication — that employers prize.
- ▶ Bringing more practice faculty — faculty who work full-time in industry — to the college to help meet demand for real-world learning experiences.
- ▶ Offering more short-term certificates, stackable certificates, and noncredit training programs. These programs require students to make a smaller investment of time and money. Students also may perceive these programs as more directly connected to their career goals.

An emerging imperative of these converging realities is that noncredit instruction must be more fully integrated into the academic programming of the colleges, and students who enroll only in noncredit programs should be treated more like their degree-seeking counterparts. These students could be continuing learners at the institution and should be supported by student services that help them maximize the value of their experience with the institution.



Photo by Allison Shelley/Complete College Photo Library

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

EDUCATION SECTOR

- ▶ **What most resonated with you from the relevant sections of the report? How will the findings affect your work? How will the findings affect your students and your employees?**

In what ways are you seeing students struggle? How can the community college help address these concerns?

How can the college and community partners work together to build stronger transitions from noncredit and adult education programs to college degree pathways?

What collaborations might promote development of short-term credentials that build relevant skills and lead directly to college degree pathways?

Imagine that the community college changes the way it quantifies learning so that outcomes focus less on hours spent in courses and more on certifying specific skills and abilities. How would this change affect dual enrollment? How would it affect university transfer?

- ▶ **Who else in the community can help address the issues you have discussed?**
- ▶ **Are you aware of current policies, practices, or priorities — in your sector or elsewhere — that will create barriers to making the kinds of changes that need to happen?**
- ▶ **What data do you need to better understand this topic?**

BUSINESS SECTOR

- ▶ **What most resonated with you from the relevant sections of the report? How will the findings affect your work? How will the findings affect your customers and employees?**

How can the college and business sector partners work together to build stronger transitions from noncredit and short-term training programs to college degree pathways?

What collaborations might promote development of short-term credentials that build relevant skills and lead directly to college degree pathways?

What would be an ideal working–learning model — one that allows students to work and learn simultaneously so they gain skills from both a job and college coursework at the same time?

REIMAGINING TEACHING ... and Ensuring That Students Learn Relevant Skills

How should the college quantify learning? Are there different ways to quantify learning (i.e., beyond the credit hour) that are more attuned to employer needs and how learning will occur in the future?

» How should the college demonstrate to students and employers that students have career-relevant skills?

- ▶ **Who else in the community can help address the issues you have discussed?**
- ▶ **Are you aware of current policies, practices, or priorities — in your sector or elsewhere — that will create barriers to making the kinds of changes that need to happen?**
- ▶ **What data do you need to better understand this topic?**

NONPROFITS, COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS, AND GOVERNMENT ORGANIZATIONS

- ▶ **What most resonated with you from the relevant sections of the report? How will the findings affect your work? How will the findings affect the people you serve — customers, clients, or constituents — and your employees?**

In what ways are you seeing clients or constituents struggle? How can the community college help address these concerns?

How can the college and community partners work together to build stronger transitions from noncredit and adult education programs to college degree pathways?

Should the college expand its capacity for awarding credit for prior learning (credit for knowledge and skills students have mastered through work, military service, and other experiences)? Why or why not?

How should the college demonstrate to students and employers that career-relevant skills are embedded throughout its courses and programs?

- ▶ **Who else in the community can help address the issues you have discussed?**
- ▶ **Are you aware of current policies, practices, or priorities — in your sector or elsewhere — that will create barriers to making the kinds of changes that need to happen?**
- ▶ **What data do you need to better understand this topic?**



USING DATA IN NEW WAYS ... to Improve Colleges' Work and Prove Colleges' Worth

Relevant pages of *Resilient by Design*:

- 31–34

Some of the forces creating chaos for higher education have their roots, at least in part, in growing concerns about the value of a college degree relative to its cost. Because communities and regions benefit from having a more educated and workplace-ready population, everyone benefits when colleges can demonstrate the relevance of college credentials.

Colleges must use data to demonstrate their relevance, show accountability, and identify opportunities to expand their impact in ways that will be most useful for community vitality.

In addition, colleges need to use data more consistently — and have a greater range of people at the college using data — to allow for better planning and to pave the way toward better outcomes.

Colleges should:

- ▶ Work with policymakers and accreditors to determine how they should measure their success. The metrics for success should address meaningful outcomes related to certificate and associate degree completion, post-college employment, wages, and successful transfer and baccalaureate completion.
- ▶ Embrace the idea of knowing, sharing, and improving the post-community college outcomes of their students, both for students who graduate and those who do not.
- ▶ Show students what jobs will be available to them after their program of study, along with the likely wages for those jobs.
- ▶ Start tracking labor market and return-on-investment outcomes program by program — and make this information required reading for faculty and staff as well as transparent to students. Data about post-college outcomes also will help colleges show potential students that the college's programs lead directly to living-wage jobs or successful transfer to a baccalaureate program.
- ▶ Work to make all faculty and staff comfortable with using data and applying data in ways that help them do their jobs more effectively and efficiently.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

EDUCATION SECTOR

- ▶ **What most resonated with you from the relevant sections of the report? How will the findings affect your work? How will the findings affect your students and your employees?**

Do employees in the education sector (including administrators, faculty, counselors, and advisers) know what the living wage in the service area is as well as what available jobs/careers offer students the opportunity to earn a living wage? Are students provided with related information about what educational and career pathways they should pursue to gain living-wage jobs/careers in the subject area(s) that interest them?

How are living-wage jobs shifting in our community? What changes are necessary to meet future needs? How can you collaborate with the college to make those changes?

How can all colleges and universities in our region make sure that all students who choose to can successfully transfer all their credits, with appropriate application to their chosen major?

What community college programs of study will be most relevant to our region in the future? Are there programs we should discontinue because they do not lead to living-wage jobs? Are there new programs we should add?

Are there additional data that you and the community college should be sharing with each other, particularly data on student transfer and success?

- ▶ **Who else in the community can help address the issues you have discussed?**
- ▶ **Are you aware of current policies, practices, or priorities — in your sector or elsewhere — that will create barriers to making the kinds of changes that need to happen?**
- ▶ **What data do you need to better understand this topic?**

BUSINESS SECTOR

- ▶ **What most resonated with you from the relevant sections of the report? How will the findings affect your work? How will the findings affect your customers and employees?**

Do leaders and employees in the business sector know what the living wage in the service area is as well as what available jobs/careers offer students the opportunity to earn a living wage? Are students and employees provided with related information about what educational and career pathways they should pursue to gain living-wage jobs/careers in the subject area(s) that interest them?

How can your company and the community college work together to meet the goal of helping every student achieve a living-wage job or career?

How are living-wage jobs shifting in our community? What changes are necessary to meet future needs? How can you collaborate with the college to make those changes?

What community college programs of study will be most relevant to our region in the future? Are there programs we should discontinue because they do not lead to living-wage jobs? Are there new programs we should add?

- ▶ **Who else in the community can help address the issues you have discussed?**
- ▶ **Are you aware of current policies, practices, or priorities — in your sector or elsewhere — that will create barriers to making the kinds of changes that need to happen?**
- ▶ **What data do you need to better understand this topic?**

NONPROFITS, COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS, AND GOVERNMENT ORGANIZATIONS

- ▶ **What most resonated with you from the relevant sections of the report? How will the findings affect your work? How will the findings affect the people you serve — customers, clients, or constituents — and your employees?**

Do leaders and employees in community partner organizations know what the living wage in the service area is as well as what available jobs/careers offer students the opportunity to earn a living wage? Are students, employees, and clients provided with related information about what educational and career pathways they should pursue to gain living-wage jobs/careers in the subject area(s) that interest them?

How can community partner organizations and the community college work together to meet the goal of helping every student achieve a living-wage job or career?

How are living-wage jobs shifting in our community? What changes are necessary to meet future needs? How can your organization collaborate with the college to make those changes?

What community college programs of study will be most relevant to our region in the future? Are there programs we should discontinue because they do not lead to living-wage jobs? Are there new programs we should add?

- ▶ **Who else in the community can help address the issues you have discussed?**
- ▶ **Are you aware of current policies, practices, or priorities — in your sector or elsewhere — that will create barriers to making the kinds of changes that need to happen?**
- ▶ **What data do you need to better understand this topic?**



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