



Community Colleges Must Be *Resilient by Design*

DISCUSSION TOOLKITS

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

Dear College Leader,

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.

Making sure your college is both effective and sustainable means preparing for the hurdles we can see now as well as the ones we cannot yet predict.

The report *Resilient by Design* identifies challenges that community colleges will face 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) Board of Directors.

We are pleased to tell you about three toolkits that will help your college and key constituencies understand and apply the *Resilient by Design* findings.

The *Resilient by Design* **Campus Discussion Toolkit** guides colleges through discussing the *Resilient by Design* findings and exploring how key forces will affect every aspect of higher education in coming years. Most important, it will help you plan strategically so your college's work will be both effective and sustainable.

Two additional *Resilient by Design* toolkits — a **Community Partners Discussion Toolkit** and a **System and State Discussion Toolkit** — will help engage additional stakeholders in similar conversations.

All three toolkits, along with the report itself, are available for download. We expect that colleges will take the lead in using the Campus Discussion Toolkit and the Community Partners Discussion Toolkit. Colleges may also wish to contact state and system leaders, invite them to use the States and Systems Discussion Toolkit, and offer the opportunity for joint discussions and collaborative work.

The pace of change has never been faster and will continue to accelerate. As *Resilient by Design* explains, colleges must begin planning for a future that will present new and intensifying challenges to current approaches. This future will demand that colleges develop processes for evaluating, discussing, and rethinking their own systems and practices. Most of all, it requires everyone at a college to think strategically about how best to use the college's resources — time, money, and talent — to meet its mission in a rapidly shifting environment.

It is clear that business as usual is no longer an option. Multiple forces are reshaping the workplace and the education landscape. Students must prepare for a future they cannot yet envision, one in which they will regularly develop new skills and reinvent themselves. Colleges must do the same at an institutional level.

As *Resilient by Design* shows, colleges will need to regularly assess their plans in light of new information and a rapidly changing environment. Thus, colleges, like their students, must become comfortable with the idea of change and reinvention. Colleges must become more nimble so their work continues to have value as both education and employment evolve.

Now is the time for bold thinking. It is time for colleges to ask themselves difficult questions, challenge their long-standing practices, and create new ways of working.

The Campus Discussion Toolkit includes four elements:

- ▶ A campus discussion guide for use with faculty, staff, and governing boards;
- ▶ A facilitator guide with suggestions for organizing work and getting started;
- ▶ A comprehensive PowerPoint presentation that facilitators can customize and use to guide their discussions; and
- ▶ A form colleges can use to tell AACC about their plans and ways AACC might support colleges' work to meet the future.

The other two toolkits — the **Community Partners Discussion Toolkit** and the **System and State Discussion Toolkit** — each includes a discussion guide, facilitator guide, and PowerPoint presentation that facilitators can customize and use to guide their discussions.

This work will require both urgency and commitment. The good news is that community colleges have shown they are up to this challenge. Our colleges have always drawn strength from their close connections to their communities and their focus on meeting local and regional needs. Your proven ability to listen and respond will serve you well in a changing and uncertain future.

The *Resilient by Design* report and toolkits give us a look into what the future holds. Let's get ready for it now so we can meet it head on.



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