

# U On Research and Leadership P D A T E

Vol. 12, No. 2

Spring 2001

## The Community College Transfer Function in the 21st Century: *Where Hopes and Dreams Collide*

by Barbara K. Townsend, University of Missouri-Columbia

The U.S. Postal Service recently marked the 100-year anniversary of the community college with a pre-stamped envelope celebrating the founding of Joliet Junior College. As the nation's oldest operating community college, Joliet Junior College serves as a material reminder of educators' hopes for the two-year college. In 1901 Joliet's high school superintendent, together with William Rainey Harper, President of the University of Chicago, established Joliet Junior College as a "postgraduate high school program" that would serve the needs of students who might not be ready for or qualified to attend a four-year college. Such students could earn the first two years of a baccalaureate degree at the junior college after which they would either end their formal education or transfer to a four-year college (History of Joliet Junior College, 2001).

The founders of the community college intended that students planning to transfer to a four-year school would enroll in the Associate of Arts (A.A.) program and receive the A.A. degree, also known as the transfer degree. Since those early days, however, other degree programs have developed, including the Associate of Science (A.S.) degree and the Associate of Applied Science (A.A.S.) degree. The A.A.S. degree, in particular, is commonly referred to as an applied or "terminal" degree. Students in applied degree programs were not originally expected to transfer to a four-year institution.

These early assumptions about who should earn which associate degree have led those who study the community college transfer function to define transfer students generally as those who *begin* their postsecondary education in the community college. Some studies include only students in A.A. programs or who have received the A.A. degree, disregarding A.S. or A.A.S. students altogether (e.g., Baldwin, 1994). Most discussions about transfer and transfer rates exclude or ignore a variety of other students who currently use the community college in "non-traditional" ways—not imagined by community college founders—to attain a baccalaureate degree. These students include

- reverse transfers
- summer sessioners
- concurrent enrollees
- applied degree-holders

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## Transfer Patterns

*Simultaneous Enrollment.* In the early 1900s transfer education was perceived as occurring only toward the four-year institution. The founders of the first community colleges expected only A.A. students to transfer, having no notion that, by the end of the century, students would transfer to the community college from the four-year institution, or that they would seek to transfer two-year college credits earned while simultaneously enrolled at a four-year college. They also did not dream that students in applied degree programs would transfer in order to attain a baccalaureate.

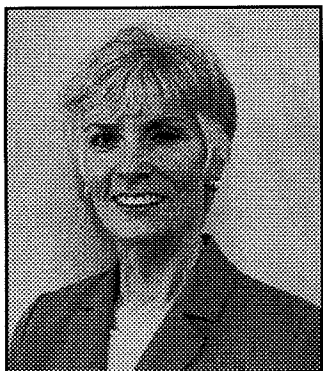
*Reverse Transfer.* The first part of the 20th century saw some four-year college students who occasionally sought admission to a community college, but by the 1960s the admission of four-year college students had become an issue for many two-year college faculty and staff. Referred to as *reverse transfers* because their transfer direction was the reverse of the expected one, these students were viewed as academically suspect because they had apparently not succeeded in the four-year college. During the 1960s and 1970s, their admission was typically rationalized as part of the community college's "salvage function." When institutional studies began to show that reverse transfers could succeed in two-year colleges, their admission became less controversial. Currently, they are eagerly recruited in order to increase enrollment (Townsend, 2000). Nationally, around 13% of two-year college students are reverse transfers (Townsend & Dever, 1999). Enrolling in the community college helps many reverse transfers attain the baccalaureate at some point, even though the path they take toward that objective was not envisioned when community colleges were first established.

*Summer Sessioners.* Another group of four-year students who use the community college transfer function is summer sessioners, who enroll in a community college during the summer to take courses for transfer to their alma mater. Moraine Valley Community College actively recruits these students and has monitored their attendance for several years. For example, its Office of Institutional Research reported that in Summer 1999, almost 1,500 four-year students from 150 colleges took an average of 4.8 credit hours at Moraine

Valley (Reverse Transfer Project, 1999, p. 1). Technically, summer sessioners are not true reverse transfers because they do not transfer their four-year college credits to the community college in pursuit of an associate's degree. [Editor's note: Illinois State University maintains a list of courses at Illinois community colleges, including Moraine Valley, which students may consult when considering taking community college courses for transfer to the university. This list allows students to determine exactly which community college courses will fulfill their graduation requirements.]

*Concurrent Enrollment.* Similar to summer sessioners are those who enroll concurrently at a community college and a four-year college to facilitate acquisition of the baccalaureate. This enrollment might take place during the summer or during the academic year. Attendance at two or more colleges is typical for a growing number of students: "Early data from the 1990s suggest that we will easily surpass a 60 percent multi-institutional attendance rate by the year 2000" (Adelman, 1999, p. vi). Central to this growth in multi-institutional attendance are four-year college students taking courses at the community college, either during the summer or concurrently while enrolled at their four-year institution. Adelman (1999) also found that "sixteen percent of postsecondary students (and 18 percent of bachelor's degree completers) engaged in alternating or simultaneous enrollment" (p. viii), although he did not indicate the percentage for simultaneous enrollment only.

*Applied Transfer.* Also not foreseen by early community college leaders were those students who enrolled in applied associate degree programs, many of whom transferred to the four-year sector at some point (Berkner, Horn, & Clune, 2000). This phenomenon has been noted in the literature for several decades (e.g., Kintzer, 1983), but there has been little research on the success of these students in attaining the baccalaureate. A recent study in Missouri of applied degree students and their academic performance at the four-year level found that, among a cohort of over 8,000 people graduating with an associate degree from Missouri public community colleges in Spring 1996, 18% or 1,475 students transferred to a public Missouri four-year college by Fall 1996. Of these students, 83% (1,219) had an A.A. degree, and 17% (256) had either an A.S. or an A.A.S. degree. By Spring 2000, the graduation rate and academic performance of the two groups were almost equal. Almost 68% of A.A. degree holders had graduated with an average grade point average (GPA) of 2.97,



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and over 65% of applied degree recipients had graduated with an average GPA of almost 2.9 (Townsend & Barnes, 2001). Missouri public colleges have been developing specific bachelor degrees and articulation agreements to facilitate the transfer of applied associate degree holders, so the findings of this study may be atypical for other states.

### Implications of Transfer Patterns

Students' use of the community college transfer function has several implications, both at the institutional and researcher levels. At the institutional level, community college leaders must realize that admitting the various types of transfer students will bring people to the community college who are sufficiently capable academically and have been admitted to four-year colleges. Thus the community college is neither their first choice nor their last chance to gain a baccalaureate. When colleges seek to increase their enrollments, they may eagerly seek to admit the transfer students; however, when they seek to *limit* enrollment—particularly in selective programs like nursing—community college leaders will need to decide who should have first chance at community college courses and programs.

Early supporters like William Rainey Harper saw the two-year college as a means to keep academically unprepared students away from the university. Other supporters held a more egalitarian perspective, viewing the two-year college as an opportunity for those who might not be admitted to four-year colleges to *begin* their pursuit of the baccalaureate. Regardless of the underlying assumption of purpose that the founders began with, they all envisioned an institution that would provide an opportunity to people who would probably not go to a four-year college. Present community college leaders need to determine whether this historical purpose should change in order to accommodate the many four-year college students who want to use the community college transfer function on their path toward a baccalaureate.

Faced with this decision, community college leaders could:

- Base admission into selective programs entirely on proven academic aptitude, which would guarantee transfer students ample space in highly selective programs;
- Set quotas in these programs and reserve a certain number of places for reverse transfers, leaving the majority of places for first-timers in academe;

- Give priority to first-timers in academe and only admit reverse transfers if available spaces exist.

These options could also apply for enrollment in highly sought courses where enrollment is limited and more sections cannot be added.

The benefits of enrolling transfer students must also be considered. Not only do these students increase enrollment, if that is a desired goal; they can also influence dynamics within the classroom by modeling participation in class discussions. Additionally, they are knowledgeable about four-year college norms and practices and they can facilitate the transfer of community college students into 4-year institutions in an informal way by passing along information about such things as financial aid.

Institutional leaders should also consider how many of their applied degree students actively desire a baccalaureate degree and fully intend to pursue one, and how can the community college support their efforts toward this objective. Do relationships need to be developed with four-year colleges willing to offer a baccalaureate in applied studies or in technological studies? Do policy leaders at the state level need to be lobbied for their commitment to facilitating the transfer of applied degree holders?

From a research perspective, transfer studies need to be more explicit about who will be defined as a transfer student. For example, studies should clearly indicate if and why the only people counted as transfer students are those who began their postsecondary education in the two-year college and only attended it before transferring with an A.A. degree. More sophisticated tracking systems may need to be created at the state level to track the transfer of students by type of associate degree. Similarly, state-level research should be conducted on the extent of undergraduate reverse transfer and on the eventual degree attainment of these students. At the institutional level, the extent of reverse transfers, summer sessioners and concurrent enrollment should be ascertained as part of institutional research on the students the community college's transfer function serves.

As the community college begins its second century, it remains the primary pathway for many students toward the baccalaureate degree. As the founders intended, the community college continues to serve students who have no chance or need to enter 4-year institutions, as well as those who

need a solid basis before launching to the next stage of their journey toward the baccalaureate degree. It has also become a supporter of the students who seek an applied degree but also wish to transfer to a four-year college. Increasingly, the community college has begun to facilitate the attainment of the baccalaureate degree for many of today's four-year college students by allowing them to transfer to the community college for awhile or enabling them to take summer courses and enroll concurrently. At issue for institutional and system-level leaders is to decide whether the hopes and dreams of these various categories of students will collide, or if all can be accommodated by the community college transfer function. ♦

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## Does the Transfer Function Matter? A Pragmatic Response to Townsend

by Brenda Jones Watkins, Triton College

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A young freshman at a highly selective university recently considered enrolling in transfer courses offered by a local community college. He spoke with some of his peers, considered the apparent benefits of the community college, such as low tuition and close proximity to his permanent residence, and began to think that the idea of taking community college courses during the summer would be advantageous.

Townsend would characterize this student a *non-traditional* transfer student, compared with students who begin their postsecondary education at a community college with the intention of eventually transitioning to a four-year institution. For this student and many others, the community college has become an accessible source of transferable college courses, a trend that, according to Townsend, has placed community college leaders at an important crossroad.

Historically, community colleges have provided access to the baccalaureate degree through such degree pathways as the Associate in Arts, or the Liberal Arts degree; the traditional community college stepping stone to higher education (Cohen & Brawer, 1996). The emergence of additional degrees (e.g., Associate in Applied Science degree), duly noted by Townsend, has created additional pathways to upper-division courses and the baccalaureate degree. Though not explicitly designed for transfer, these pathways may include articulated course options that maximize the transfer of credit hours to a senior institution.

Townsend's perspective on the transfer function is placed in the context of the original intent of the founders of the community college. The historical framework, however, has been re-framed and expanded to incorporate the needs of a broader variety of students. Currently, the transfer function is understood broadly, as is evident from the

multiple categories noted by Townsend. Students often make multiple transitions from one educational institution to another throughout the various stages in their lives. The important question that emerges for community college leaders is not *whether* the community college will serve or not serve the students who come, but rather, *how best* to facilitate transfer between institutions? How well will we serve students in this process?

One answer to this question can be found in articulation agreements. In recent years, several initiatives have been pursued by two- and four-year institutions to foster strong articulation and thus to increase transfer opportunities for students. Statewide articulation initiatives have been implemented in several regions of the U.S. for the purpose of streamlining the transfer process. Dual admissions agreements, formal articulation, and educational/partnership agreements proliferate and emphasize the importance of the community college transfer function. Four-year institutions have the opportunity to offer upper-division courses at community college campuses. Under some agreements, students may actually complete requirements for the baccalaureate degree without leaving the community college campus. These measures reflect the expanding role of the community college in the landscape of higher education.

Given this burgeoning role, the viability of the community college transfer function must be explored within the context of the larger education community. During its 2001 Conference, the American Association for Higher Education featured a session on a P-16 educational model that represented progression through an integrated system. This educational model demonstrates a serious attempt to create a more responsive system. It seeks to increase student learning with a smooth, seamless process. A concern for student needs and the potential for strengthening articulation through multi-institutional collaboration drove the discussion of this model at the conference session. Educators and researchers like Townsend can contribute to our growing understanding of how the community college transfer function will refocus the community college mission.

Students will continue to access the transfer process in multiple ways, and institutional support of their various needs is essential. Community college educators must wisely consider how best to assist students in reaching their educational goals. Townsend suggests expanding the role of research in order to furnish educators with useful data about transfer students and their progression through the higher education system. I would suggest other considerations as we consider the future community college transfer function:

- Transfer options facilitated by technology/virtual initiatives in education
- Multiple educational ports of entry and re-entry
- Transfer patterns in relation to economic fluctuations
- Workplace trends: skill development and training
- Individual educational cost factors

Access to higher education will continue to be central to the mission of the community college. The provision of full access necessitates flexible processes. An enhanced transfer function provides students with access to admissions, curricula, financial assistance, and support services. As community colleges evolve, the transfer function can become an avenue that will open access to higher education for the broader community.

As the hopes and dreams of the founders, students, and institutional leaders merge rather than collide, perhaps the pertinent issue becomes the extent to which these hopes and dreams for the transfer function can be realized. For the future of the community college, shared hopes and dreams do matter. ♦

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# COMMUNITY COLLEGE LEADERSHIP RETREAT

## (SECOND ANNUAL)

### May 24-25, 2001

### Allerton Park, Monticello, IL

University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign (UIUC) students, alumni, faculty and friends are pleased to announce our second annual Community College Leadership Retreat to be held at Allerton Park near Monticello, Illinois. Allerton offers an historically significant setting for our group because of its importance to the early development of Illinois' community college system. Since the 1950s, the Allerton House has provided a welcoming environment for leaders from throughout the state to gather to share their hopes and dreams for community college education. Continuing this tradition, this year's retreat will explore important issues, such as the preparation of community college leaders. Dr. Stephen Katsinas, Professor and Chair of Bill J. Priest Center for Community College Education at the University of North Texas, a recognized expert on community college leadership preparation, will be our keynote speaker. Other experts, including Dr. James Palmer of Illinois State University and Mr. Todd Jorns, Illinois Community College Board, will address critical issues, including finance, technology, and partnerships.

Altogether, this year's agenda promises to be an exciting one, filled with new ideas from outstanding speakers and respectful of the need for everyone to share in open dialogue. We welcome the involvement of educators from throughout the state, and encourage their attendance. Space is limited, however, so prompt registration is welcomed.

We hope to see you there!

#### THURSDAY (May 24th)

- 1:00 – 2:00 Registration**
- 2:00 – 2:15 Welcome/Introductions**
- Judy Marwick, Jackie Davis (CCEL '98) and Debra Bragg, UIUC
- 2:15 – 4:00 Community College Leadership for the Present and Future**
- Terry Ludwig, President, Shawnee Community College
  - Hans A. Andrews, President, Olney Community College
  - Paul McCarthy, President, Prairie State Community College
  - John Erwin, President, Illinois Central College
- 4:00 – 5:00 Community College Finance – Issues and Trends**
- Jim Palmer, Illinois State University
  - King Alexander, UIUC
- 5:00 – 6:00 Social Hour**
- 6:00 – 7:00 Dinner**
- 7:00 – 9:00 The Leadership Imperative**
- Steven Katsinas, Professor, University of North Texas and Don A Buchholz Chair and Director, Bill J. Priest Center for Community College Education

#### FRIDAY (May 25th)

- 7:00 – 8:30 Breakfast**
- 8:45 – 10:15 Community College Partnerships – Challenges and Opportunities**
- 10:15 – 10:30 Break**
- 10:30 – 12:00 What is the Future of Technology and Community College Education?**
- Jeff Bathe, Heartland College
  - Todd Jorns, Illinois Community College Board
  - Tom Ramage, Parkland College
  - Scott Johnson, UIUC
- 12:00 – 1:00 Lunch**
- 1:00 – 2:00 Concurrent Sessions:**
- Succeeding at Qualifying Exams (Special session for the CCEL '98 Cohort)
  - Maximizing the Cohort Experience (Special session for the CCEL '01 Cohort)
  - Staying Connected (Special session for CCEL alumni and friends)
- 2:00 – 2:30 Closing Session**
- 2:30 Networking Continues**

To request a registration form please contact:

**Linda Iliff**  
**E-mail: [l-iliff@uiuc.edu](mailto:l-iliff@uiuc.edu)**  
**Telephone: 217-244-9390**  
**Fax: 217-244-0851**

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OCCRL Web Site: <http://ocrl.ed.uiuc.edu/events.asp>

Allerton Park Web Site:

<http://www.conted.uiuc.edu/rapcc/index.html>

# The Image of the Community College: *How do key stakeholders perceive the image of the community college?*

by Yvonne Mitkos, Lincoln Land Community College

*There was a little girl, who had a little curl,  
Right in the middle of her forehead.  
And when she was good,  
she was very, very good,  
But when she was bad she was horrid!*

The distinction between “good” and “bad” is very clear in this simple old nursery rhyme, but the popularly perceived image of a “good” versus a “bad” community college is not nearly as clear-cut. For the community college, which possesses wide-ranging nuances in image—from extremely negative to extremely positive—the question of public image is not one that can be left to chance without potentially disastrous results.

The public, in some cases, is ambivalent toward the community college; in others, *a priori* perceptions exist. In this article, I explore the public perception of the community college. While engaged in graduate work at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, I conducted one-on-one interviews with community college stakeholders at five Regional Forums held by the Lincoln Land Community College (LLCC) Board of Trustees since 1999. These interviews reveal important details about stakeholder perceptions of the community college image. I also relied on my documented record of observations made during the different Forums to further understand the role of image.

By the words “image” and “perception” I refer to the “mental conception” of the community college in the minds of stakeholders that determines their attitudes toward the college. For example, one recent college graduate reported that, while she would never have considered attending a community college herself, she did think that the dual credits earned by her two younger brothers from the community college were an asset, as was the lower tuition rate. She felt that her initial perception of the community college as “less appealing” had softened somewhat as she grew older. Occasionally, however, regrettable references to the community college as the “Losers’ Last Chance College” are still heard among certain sectors of the public.

In my on-going effort to educate and inform stakeholders that the community college can be an *equal choice* rather than a *last chance*, I consider my first task to be to convince community college leaders that the issue of *image* must not be ignored.

## Background

As early as 1947 the President’s Commission on Higher Education acknowledged that part of the community college mission was to arouse public opinion to “an awareness of the transcendent importance of education” (Zook, 1947, p. 44) so that not only would the public *support* increase in appropriations for higher education, but *demand* them. John Lombardi, in his foreword to *The American Community College*, wrote that

‘identity’ or ‘image’ remains one of the most serious concerns of community college educators—a concern that has been with them almost from the beginning. It will, the authors imply, remain with them as long as the community college remains for students a second or lower choice than an equal choice with other higher education institution. (Cohen & Brawer, 1996, p. xiv)

Other community college scholars have also been concerned with the issue of image. Thomas L. Hardin attributes the accreditation process with helping establish a solid academic reputation for community colleges. First and foremost, however, the Illinois community college “must fight to make its unique contribution known and felt throughout the state” (Hardin, 1975, p. 302). This need to promote a positive image continues to be felt among community college leaders today. Joseph J. Cipfl CEO of the Illinois Community College Board states, “The public doesn’t realize the great asset that exists here in the community colleges. We’ve got to tell our story much better” (Scism, 1998, p. 9).

The image of the community college is contradictory at best. Duvall (1987) says that research must be done to find out about a college’s real and perceived image. The problem of public perception

of the community college is a perennial one that has not changed with maturity of the institution (Cohen & Brawer, 1996). High school teachers with negative perceptions of the community college, for example, have still been known to ask students disparagingly why they would want to attend the community college instead of a more prestigious college. The logic of confidence theory (Meyer & Rowan, 1977, 1983), on the other hand, suggests that key stakeholders will take for granted in good faith, or in other words *perceive*, that the community college is faithfully executing its mission.

Thus, it becomes an urgent responsibility of the community college to understand and to narrow the gap between perception and reality. The image of a school can be changed through systematic efforts to communicate with key constituents, but it takes time and hard work for a college to project a new image that will dissipate negative opinions (Ashby, 1983).

A critical revelation in the Lincoln Land Community College district has shown that constituents in regions far removed from the main campus in Springfield are not as knowledgeable about the college as they should be. Our district is the largest district in the state geographically, and is comprised of all or parts of 15 counties, serving over 30,000 students annually from a 4,115-square-mile area. Stakeholders from the more remote corners of this region do not really know what Lincoln Land Community College can offer them. These outlying stakeholders believe that Lincoln Land representatives "didn't get out much!"

I define stakeholders as those "individuals or groups who have a direct interest in and may be affected by the program" (Worthen, Sanders, & Kirkpatrick, 1997, p.

56), and these may include students and parents, business leaders, policy-makers (legislators or governing board members), high school teachers and counselors, and patrons at large, who support our endeavors with their taxes.

Lincoln Land Community College holds Regional Forums to target invited stakeholders, including:

- members of trade and labor unions
- school district superintendents, principals and counselors
- local and regional education for employment specialists
- representatives from the healthcare industry, leisure industry

- manufacturing companies with over 50 employees
- program advisory council members
- local and regional Chambers of Commerce, economic development councils
- regional advisory committees
- representatives of state and local government

Lincoln Land's philosophy of institutional leadership considers the needs of district stakeholders to be the cornerstone on which to build educational programs. With this in mind, the LLCC Board of Trustees conceived the plan to host Regional Forums with the intent to *listen and learn* from constituents. In 1999 the first regional forums for LLCC were held. In an effort to become more responsive to these constituents, the board secured a marketing consultant and a new Director of Public Information.

Each forum since 1999 has allotted time on the program for stakeholders to bring their concerns to the attention of the Board of Trustees and key college leaders. This aspect of the public meetings gave those stakeholders not typically heard a chance to reveal their "image" perceptions.

For example, during the Taylorville Regional Forum the mayor asked the assembled body, "What is the perception of Lincoln Land now?" A student in attendance responded that students say they

The image of a school can be changed through systematic efforts to communicate with key constituents, but it takes time and hard work for a college to project a new image that will dissipate negative opinions (Ashby, 1983).

are attending Lincoln Land. On the other hand, during one-on-one interviews with key constituents, it was reported that the positive attributes of the college are simply not being communicated: "There are just not enough

people saying it in enough places and enough ways." These comments suggest that changes in stakeholder perceptions of the community college vary from group to group.

### Faculty

One way colleges can communicate positive attributes is by consciously working to heighten stakeholder awareness of the institution's mission. At Lincoln Land Community College faculty play a key role in this communication because LLCC places student learning as its highest priority. It follows, therefore, that teaching is also of utmost importance, especially teaching by dedicated, caring faculty.



Through my interviews it became apparent that the community college faculty is a perceived strength among stakeholders. Former students identified teachers as a vital source of support. When comparing her community college teachers to her university teachers, one student emphatically stressed that the community college teachers had a more caring attitude: "I remember my professors from the community college and what I learned from them. I don't remember them in the university."

Furthermore, "Faculty are incredible ambassadors," professed an administrator in yet another interview. She explained, "College and university faculty members are important in the hierarchy of citizens of the United States and particularly in the Midwest, [and] I think that our faculty are one of our best kept secrets!"

Likewise, class size and teacher-student ratios make the community college environment more learner-centered, thus creating a more personal rapport between the students and teachers. These positive attributes need to be touted!

## Conclusions

The observations of stakeholders gleaned from my interviews suggest that their perceptions of the community college are indeed affected by their points of reference. Their opinions have been formulated from ideas spread by word of mouth, public advertising, or adverse or positive news headlines. Each constituent has his or her own version of the story to tell. It is these stories that inspire flexibility in the college's mission statement from year to year, as LLCC seeks to address the *perceived* needs of the public.

## Recommendations

Based on the observations derived from my research, two basic recommendations present themselves:

First, because of the dynamic nature of a public image, the college leadership should adopt a philosophy of public relations and marketing that places a higher priority on image. A system needs to be in place that, like a revolving door in colder climates, will analyze in-coming information and, in a timely manner, follow up with out-going responses that counteract negative factors and advance positive ones in the broader community.

Second, the duties of the Director of PIO should be divided between a marketing and a public relations specialist. When I served on the search committee to hire a new PIO Director at LLCC, applicants demonstrated either a strong proficiency in marketing or in public relations, but not both. In

order for the college to do the best possible job with image, human resources should include two individuals with diverse, but complementary job skills in the areas of public relations and marketing.

These basic changes in the community college's approach to the issue of image will go far in creating a more positive public image among key stakeholders. ♦

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# State Taxes Support Rising College Costs

by Jackie L. Davis, Olney Central College

The axiom, "Change is the only constant," is certainly as true in American higher education as anywhere. Nationwide, from academic years 1980 to 1992, private universities increased their revenue per FTE (full-time equivalent enrollment) by 39%, public universities increased their revenue per FTE by 12%, while public community colleges actually decreased their revenue per FTE by 1% (National Center for Education Statistics, 1996). New tuition-based revenues for the private four-year sector consisted of new money that was not substituted for any loss of revenue. However, new tuition-based revenues in the public four-year sector were used to substitute for corresponding cuts in state appropriations. University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign officials contend that the share derived from state taxes has declined from 49% of the university's total budget in 1980 to only 31.5% today (Breslin & Vogell, 2000). Thus, public four-year revenues per FTE have remained relatively flat during the twelve-year period—a nominal increase on the average of 1% per year. The decrease in revenue per FTE experienced by community colleges is likely the result of enormous nationwide increases in enrollment without corresponding significant increases in revenue.

During the period 1980 to 1997, headcount enrollment in all four-year colleges and universities increased by only 11.7% whereas the headcount enrollment of all community colleges increased by 22.7% (National Center for Educational Statistics, 1999). The increase in community college enrollment has been nearly double that of four-year colleges and universities. Furthermore, according to the American Association of Community Colleges (2000), 44% of all undergraduate enrollments in 2000 are in community colleges.

From 1980 to 1999, in-state tuition and required fees at all public four-year colleges and universities increased from \$738 per year to \$3,226 per year whereas the tuition and required fees at all private four-year colleges and universities increased from \$3,225 per year to \$14,003 per year (NCES, 1999). However, during this same period of time, in-state tuition and required fees at all two-year colleges increased from \$526 per year to \$1,704 per year (NCES). Even after adjusting for inflation, the increases, and the difference between the three increases, are still substantial. In Illinois, to help offset the sizeable increases in tuition and required fees for Illinois students attending private and public institutions, of higher education, the state's legislature has continued to appropriate increasing amounts of tax dollars for direct student aid support.

According to a recent report from The National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education (2000), Illinois ranks number one among the 50 states by offering student financial aid at 124% of the federal student aid level while some states provide little or no state financial aid for college students. ISAC (Illinois Student Assistance Commission) is the state agency that receives appropriations from the legislature to support the MAP (Monetary Award Program). ISAC awards need-based MAP grants to students attending Illinois higher education institutions, and the institutions then submit vouchers to ISAC for repayment of the students' tuition awards.

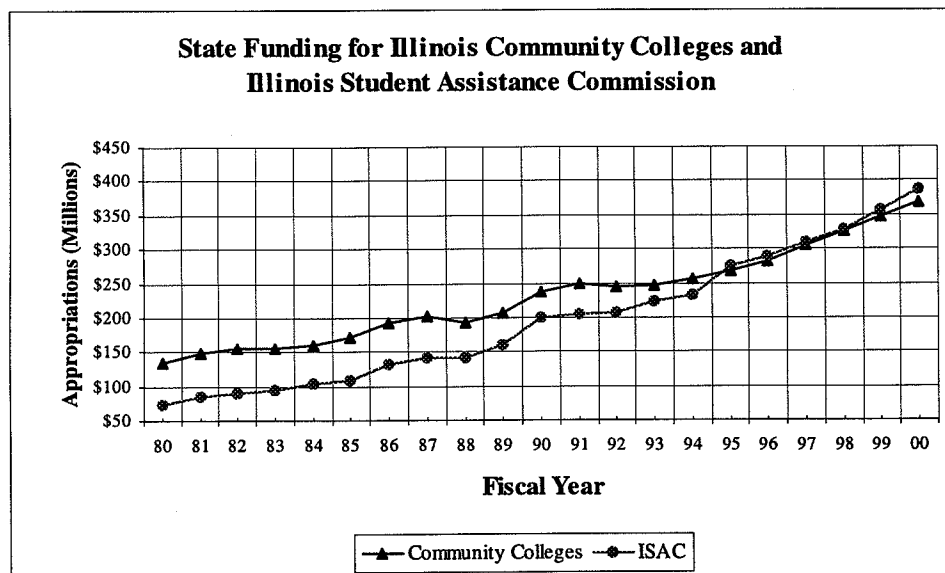


Chart: State Funding for Illinois Community Colleges and Illinois Student Assistance Commission

Source: Palmer, J. (2000).

For comparison purposes, the chart shows the amount of tax dollars appropriated by the state of Illinois for the ISAC and the Illinois Community College System from fiscal year 1980 through fiscal year 2000.

Although state appropriations for support of direct student aid and community colleges have both increased since fiscal year 1980, state appropriations for need-based tuition awards have increased at a much greater rate. In fact, in fiscal year 1995, state appropriations for Illinois student aid surpassed that which was appropriated for support of the state's entire community college system. However, it is very difficult to compare or contrast the financial needs of students attending four-year institutions with students attending two-year institutions.

To put the amount of aid awarded in perspective relative to higher education institutional types involved, the following chart shows the percentage of students, by institutional type, whose students received ISAC awards in school year 1999-2000.

| Sector                               | % of all students applying for aid | % of all ISAC funds awarded |
|--------------------------------------|------------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Public community colleges            | 40%                                | 12%                         |
| Public 4-year colleges/universities  | 29%                                | 37%                         |
| Private 4-year colleges/universities | 25%                                | 43%                         |
| Other                                | 6%                                 | 8%                          |

Table: Illinois Student Assistance Commission (2000).

It is perhaps noteworthy that, while only one-quarter of the students attending Illinois' private four-year colleges and universities were eligible to receive ISAC monetary awards in school year 1999-2000, they, in fact, received nearly one-half of all the state's public tax funds awarded by the ISAC. Regardless, a student's total student financial need will typically be higher at a four-year institution, private as well as public, because of the necessary inclusion of basic living expenses—room and board, whereas most community college students, especially in Illinois, live at home—their or their

parents'. One can only surmise that this increase in need-based student financial assistance is a direct result of the Illinois Legislature's response to the costs of attending private and public four-year colleges and universities increasing at a much greater rate than personal family income. Undoubtedly, more research on the cost of higher education in Illinois will likely provide valuable information for state legislators and higher education policymakers to consider. ♦

[Editor's note: We would invite anyone with an interest in this topic to respond to Mr. Davis in a future issue of UPDATE.]

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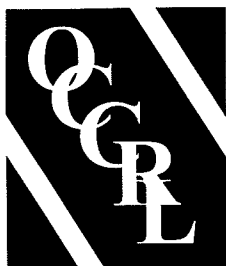
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